



# COTTON MILL PEOPLE OF THE PIEDMONT

A Study in Social Change

BY  
MARJORIE A. POTWIN

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MARJORIE A. POTWIN

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**On**

**THE PIONEERS OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY  
OF THE PIEDMONT**

**THEY WERE THE BUILDERS OF A NEW STATE**





## PREFACE

IN 1916 the writer arrived at the Saxon Mills in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to take up her work as recreational leader in the very heart of the New Industrial South. Born and educated near the center of textile New England she had found the factories there of interest, and she had read in the "*World's Work*" and other magazines, articles (some of them sensational) about the cotton-mill people of the New South.

At that time Winthrop, the State Normal College of South Carolina, was undertaking extension work in a few mill villages under the provisions of the Smith-Lever Bill. Through that channel a position was obtained. From persons who had traveled South, and from a reading knowledge of the mills, the general impression was gained that the recreational work would consist of playing with the child laborers during their short noon recess.

Ignorance of real conditions at the mills is further attested by vivid memories of a typhoid inoculation, a new small-pox vaccination, and the reciprocity of a flash light and tiny automatic pistol for self-protection. The rest of the writer's equipment consisted of some standard books on games, and a love of adventure.

Face to face with the actual situation, most of these preconceived ideas have suffered a violent upheaval. Living among the mill people and associating as neighbor and personnel worker with them day in and day out has convinced the writer that as yet no one really knows the mill people, nor are they fully awake to themselves. They are under-

going a dynamic social change, partly desirable, partly undesirable.

Thoughts about this situation, what it means in the New South, what it may come to mean in the national industrialism of the United States, together with a vivid interest in the mill people, collectively and singly, have led to sojourns in the mountain districts from which they have come and to the acceptance of hospitality in tenant cabin and more pretentious farm house in the country.

The area of observation in this study is a strictly limited one and for the most part is confined to the central Piedmont region, extending approximately from Danville, Va. on the north to Gainesville, Ga. on the south. Within this limited area a still more intensive observation has been made of the cotton-mill people in and near Spantanburg, S. C. Even in so limited an area mill villages vary. Some communities claim to have social conditions superior to those existing in the village of Saxon described in this study; but other communities appear to be more backward.

Whenever attention is called to the similarity of conditions at Saxon with those existing elsewhere in the Piedmont or other cotton-mill districts it is primarily for the purpose of a better understanding and interpretation of those mills and areas in which the recorded observations of the writer have been made.

To better understand the cotton-mill people in terms of community was the purpose of the writer's studies in Social Science at Columbia University in 1919. To better evaluate factors permeating them as an industrial group, the mill people of the Piedmont were held in mind constantly during a study of Labor at the University of Chicago in 1923, and while attending workmen's meetings in the hot-beds of radicalism in the city of Chicago.

Comparisons between the life of the mill people of the

Piedmont and that of industrial workers in the factory towns of New England and the Middle West have been sought first hand. In the position of Community Director at the Saxon and the Chesnee Mills for the past six years a continual survey has been made of the local community and general social conditions, of activities in it and other mill communities; while, in the personnel phases of the day's work at the mills, confidences as sacred as the soul of friendship have been born in moments of intense human needs and emotions. The aim of this study throughout has been to consider the people rather than their industry; their social psychology and development rather than the economic and political conditions that have produced the observed results.

Living at all the cotton mills of the Piedmont are people like those at Saxon. Here and there are the same extremes of capacity and lack of ability, of comfort and poverty, of personal cleanliness and filth. Throughout all the textile communities like social and moral and economic conditions among the people show themselves in the same relief against the same background of the cotton mill. These descriptions of developments at Saxon are representative of the great social change that is taking place at all the mills. They are common experiences, and to record them in one setting is but to call attention to their presence in many other places.

Among the readers of this book there may be mill executives, social workers, and people otherwise connected with the cotton mills, who may rightly feel that they are reading a record parallel with their own experiences. I hope that for them these pages will open up a wealth of personal reminiscence, rich in those incidents which endear human relationships to us or which flavor the every-day things with a dash of ameliorating humor.

Into the making of this book has gone the help of many people to whom I wish to express my thanks.

First of all to the people of the Saxon and the Chesnee Mills communities among whom a decade of happy experience has been spent. Their courtesy and their co-operation, their patience and their trust have held me to my job, and I earnestly hope that in some measure, at least, I have enriched their lives, as they have enriched mine.

I also wish to thank Professor Paul H. Douglas of the University of Chicago, under whom parts of this work were undertaken as my Master's thesis. Particularly to Professors Franklin H. Giddings, Alvan A. Tenney and Samuel McCune Lindsay of Columbia University I owe a debt of thanks for their helpful suggestions and encouragement in regarding this dissertation.

Above all others, my fullest gratitude goes out to Mr. John Adger Law, President of the Saxon and the Chesnee Mills. His interest and his confidence in the mill people have been my inspiration, while his practical knowledge of how people live and work together, combined with his high ideals for them, have been chart and compass to my endeavors.

I esteem it a rare privilege to have tried to carry on for him the development of those things to which he gave his personal attention in the early days of the village, and to undertake those additional things which—time and other responsibilities permitting—he himself would like to do, in a fuller measure, with, and among his people.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE outstanding transformation of the South since the Civil War is the industrial evolution; crystallized in the manufacture of textiles, and creating an industrial people in the midst of an agriculturally organized society.

The cotton-mill village is the "outward and visible sign" of all that is taking place in this phenomenal manufacturing development. It is the embodiment of the spirit of a new social order in which there is great prosperity for the few and much well-being for the many. The cotton-mill village is both particularly distinctive of the new Industrial South, and unique as a factor in American labor conditions.

To the casual observer, the cotton-mill village presents a picture of one of the most extensive housing systems furnished anywhere in the United States by employer for employees, with a community life, rare in its homogeneity and unusual in its many special features.

To one who is attracted to the situation by the sociological values contained, or to one who simply loves his fellow man, the mill village is a stage set with an industrial romance; a story of intensely human relationships in colorful relief against the sombre background of devastation and the gray isolation of "The Forgotten Man."

The antecedents of the mill people, their transition from a rural folk to an industrial society, the awakening of their latent capacity and its adaptation to an economic system, the many complicated questions involved, are of absorbing interest, a study in dynamic social change.

Seldom, if ever, has the mill village been understood in



the entirety of its social significance. Indeed, even its place in the economic re-organization of the South is not often taken into consideration. Almost within a generation the cotton mills of the Carolinas emerged from the state of a scattered, inconspicuous craft into an industry that is the very backbone and stamina of all the business enterprise of that section. Financial success has carried social advance along at a tremendous rate, for while Mammon can be a terrible master he is also a good servant to the higher needs of mankind.

Change from one kind of society to another is always complicated with grave problems of readjustment, and in the development of the cotton mills were interwoven not only those problems of transition, but all the intricate and harrowing experiences of the reconstruction of a stricken land. Situations, difficult in themselves, were made acute by the rapidity of the transition.

The present industrial development of the South has been severely criticized from within and from without. Adherents to the old regime, hugging to their hearts traditions and dreams of former charm and leisure, have denounced the advent of industrialism here as Matthew Arnold did in England. Instead of seeing a blessing in the way in which white labor is at last getting to work, these Bourbons cherish illusions of the impoverished existence of the past as preferable to the fear of mediocrity and the commonplace. Happily the influence of these critics is entirely academic, perhaps now archaic.

Certain critics have protested against the feudal character of the organization of the mill village, some have damned the manufacturers as benevolent despots, and many of the most prominent social reformers of the country have denounced the degradation of labor resulting from employment in the mill. "Others insist that, in spite of all such criticism, the

general effect is favorable to educational and social progress, and even to a larger freedom of thought.”<sup>1</sup>

The lack of knowledge of real facts and intelligent public opinion belongs to no one school or geographical location of the critics. While some of the most sensational criticisms have come from the pens of non-residents, it is very probable that, for example, even the members of many church societies on the very threshold of the manufacturing districts know as much, if not more, about *real* conditions in Korea or the Congo as they know about *actual* life in the mill villages at hand.

Not only does no one outside their ranks really know the mill people, but even they have not yet found themselves nor are they trying to. They simply do this or that, which may look paternalistic or dependent to the world, very largely because it is their natural expression of an inherent spiritual or social or occupational tradition. Each one, led on by his individual criteria, seems to be adapting himself to a new state of affairs without very much thought about it. Situations are rejected or accepted by the mill people according to ingrained principles—principles which were defended with life blood at King’s Mountain and Manassas, and which now know no surrender in cases of real or imaginary personal injustices of law or society or man. Not that the mill people are contentions, but as they see it, right is right and wrong is wrong.

Real Southerners, they stress the personal equation and hold individual sovereignty and the freedom of contract supreme. They have a fine independence, yet they seem to lack studied self-direction. Group consciousness among them is more from external pressure than internal motivation. They despise being treated as a mass. Their group action is really collective individualism, unless led to abnor-

<sup>1</sup>Mims, Edward, *The Advancing South*, p. 81.

mality in the heat of religious or patriotic fervor. They are sympathetic with each other in trouble; yet, notwithstanding a pronounced clannishness among families, when it comes to matters of common endeavor, "every tub must set on its own bottom," as their own homely words express it. However, is this a local or sectional or national characteristic?

Perhaps the least American thing about these contemporary ancestors of ours is that they do not envy wealth. Life close to the soil does not breed socialistic covetousness and those who think about wealth at all have seen it created by the ability and sustained endeavor of their neighbors. Moreover, most of the mill people are accumulating in proportion to the evolution of their wants, and they feel prosperity in terms of improvement, not exploitation. Also, too, they live in a section where a prevalent idea is to get the maximum of comfort with the minimum of exertion.

Perhaps nowhere else is there a people which singly and collectively has subjected itself less to self-discipline and social control. This is not due to lawless intent but to a love of freedom inherent for generations. Some there are who were born beyond the ordinary reach of the law and they see in it only an unwarranted restriction of personal liberty. Public health measures, compulsory school-attendance laws and standardized conditions of employment do not set easily on their shoulders, and they build up their own defense against such legislation by moving into localities where enforcement is less strict. Others there are who have long since caught the vision of constructive social order; who have, indeed, taken their part in its creation.

To rightly inform himself about the mill people, the conditions of their work and life, to know them as they really are, rather than to know them by hearsay, or to form snap judgments by appearances, would add materially to the education of many an individual, who is co-resident and fellow

citizen in the same State, even in the same county or town, with this great industrial people.

Frequently they have been checked up against superimposed standards of well-being and comfort, but such a survey seldom gets beneath the surface for the mill people have their own deeply entrenched ideas about what constitutes "the good life." Because of their recent chrysalis they are hardly measurable with a twentieth-century yardstick.

But the composite attitude and behaviorism of the mill people is no more difficult to analyze than is the situation which centers around them.

We retrace history and almost conclude that among the mill people of the Piedmont is being repeated the situation in Massachusetts when the early mills were manned by native Yankee boys and girls. In the face of such a conclusion arise two sets of mores so utterly different that they invalidate a comparison between the human element in the old New England factories and the present Piedmont mills.

New England worshipped educational advance and enshrined the professions. She admired thrift and put but little premium upon idle leisure. These differences in mores are affected, too, by a change in times. Native labor at Lowell never knew the difficulty of discriminating between the cost of a Ford car and the expense of an education. Is it not possible that those operatives could save money with which to get out of the industry because they could not buy such a multitude of things with which to be comfortable and contented and entertained within the industry? Moreover, from the concentrated area of New England hundreds of native sons and daughters were drawn into the New West and the nearby large cities. Such competition has not existed in the South.

Geographical differences, too, complicate the comparison. New England mills were not surrounded by a vast section,

rich in its agricultural resources, nor bordered upon by such a reservoir of latent native labor as is even now contained in the Blue Ridge mountains and the Great Smokies, where over three and one-half million people are even yet untouched by the call of modern times.

In South Carolina a strong economic and sociological situation has been created by the establishment of cotton mills among rich farm lands. Not only do the wage earners furnish a market for the products of the diversified agriculture, but the close presence of the country tends to promote among all classes satisfaction with simple standards of living. There is a very constant inter-migration between mill village and farm, while the continued popularity of the large family in this section further shows that agriculture is being supplemented rather than supplanted by industry in the Piedmont.

Nor did New England ever feel a strong antipathy toward the immigration of foreigners, although when competition with their standards of living developed native labor withdrew itself to a higher plane. The cotton-mill people of the South have a feeling that America is for Americans, and they express that conviction in strong racial prejudice and scant intolerance of any but the Protestant religion.

Any parallelism with Great Britain is modified by the fact that "England may be said to have launched upon her Industrial Evolution unawares. With the South the movement was conscious, distinctly marked in its commencement in the minds and hearts of the people. In Britain the human problems came as a consequence of the development; in the South they emerged with it and remained, for a long period at least co-eval with the industrial advance."<sup>1</sup>

At this particular time when the development of the textile South sweeps onward with amazing rapidity—the new

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, Broadus, *The Rise of the Cotton Mills in the South*, p. 160.

capital invested in the mills of South Carolina alone being \$16,000,000 in 1925—it is opportune to consider just what is taking place among the thousands who have cast their lot in the mill village, so peculiarly tinged with the characteristics of the Old and the New. It is not amiss to factorize this great social change and to mark some items as worthy of preservation, while relegating others into the discard of the past.

First-hand knowledge of the mills in the Piedmont indicates that Saxon Mills, the intensive field of this study, is typical. This mill is in the heart of the manufacturing district, it is neither urban nor remotely rural. It is of average size, its age is medium, it is neither the most nor the least successful financially. Its social policies are progressive, yet tempered with conservatism. Saxon has frequently been used as a sample by the United States Department of Labor, by the United States Children's Bureau, by the United States Pellagra Commission and by the National Industrial Conference Board.

“The magnitude of the economic importance of the textile industry in the South is illustrated by the figures for South Carolina, where, in 1925, the product of the cotton mills was seventy-four per cent of the value of all the industrial products of the State, seventy per cent of the wages paid were to textile employees, seventy per cent of all wage earners in the State were textile operatives, sixty-five per cent of the total number were localized in the mills of the Piedmont, with twenty-seven per cent of these centered in Spartanburg County, which since 1920 has been the premier manufacturing district of the State.”<sup>1</sup>

It is this vast group of wage earners, the human factor in industry, a people in the making, that holds our interest.

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of Commission of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry of the State of South Carolina, 1925.

Around it centers the complexity of all social questions, about it repeatedly have been expressed conflicting opinions. In the hands of this new people lies awakening power to color the future of the State. What has been, and is, and should be the interplay of influences between the cotton mill and the cotton-mill people? What contribution is within the capability of this Anglo-Saxon stock, undergoing re-birth into society founded on a new regime? Is their social change solving problems, or is it creating and multiplying perplexing situations? This is the challenge to the best thought of educators, and to the most constructive ability of social leaders.

To understand the significance of the cotton mills as a social and industrial institution we must look at them against the background of their origin. To measure the social change which they have wrought we must know the truth about their influence over the lives of men, women and children subjected to their impress. To know how far we have come we must look back to the point from which we started, to go on as intelligent adventurers we must sort over our luggage, take stock of our possessions, cast aside useless encumbrances, take on new things made for new times and new ways.

This study attempts to show only how far and in what manner the journey has been made thus far, and to take stock of the rich social possessions and possibilities in the cotton-mill situation of the Piedmont. Discarding the unnecessary and replenishing with the new will be done by the travelers themselves according to their several needs and desires. My fervent hope is that this inventory may stimulate more careful thought to the task so that it may never be said that the New South is richer and stronger and in many things wiser, but it is neither so happy nor so kindly as the Old.

That those at the helm have wished this tremendous in-

dustrial adventure to mean the spiritual enrichment of life, as well as financial success, is evidenced by the millions of dollars contributed by the cotton mills to education, recreation, religion, philanthropy and welfare of all kinds and descriptions. Just how constructively applied much of this has been is a question needing light.

This study is not a presentation of mass data to substantiate any hypothesis; it is simply an interpretation of the cotton mill in its social aspects, of the mill village in terms of community, of the mill people as a social group. It is a story built on a wide variability of individual differences within a homogeneous group. With subjective understanding, but with objective fairness, it attempts to set forth the attitude, the interest, the feeling of the mill people. It is a record of their self-expression and their contacts with social, political, educational and religious life in the State. It is a description of human nature in a melting pot. It is, above all else, *a study in social change*.

While this picture of the cotton-mill people is painted in the bold strokes of individual action, the stimuli and the response are by no means too local, nor too personal to be duplicated again and again among the mills of the Piedmont.

To indicate the general situation an intensive study has been made of one typical cotton mill against the historical background of the industry in South Carolina. Representative organizations and institutions of the people have been described, while significant families associated with the mill have been sketched to illustrate exactly what is taking place in the lives of the thousands of individuals who comprise the cotton-mill people of the New Industrial South.

This dynamic social change is in overlapping stages of evolution. It is advancing in a kind of trial-and-error process rather than by studied discrimination. In plain English, "We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way," characterizes the movement.



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL

ALTHOUGH the date of the establishment of cotton manufacturing on a machine-equipped basis in South Carolina has been fixed at 1790, and the present large-scale development did not gain impetus until 1880, spinning and weaving were carried on extensively from the very founding of the colony, and manufactured goods, in excess of home consumption were exported. In 1810 "the manufactured products of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia exceeded in value and variety those of the New England States."<sup>1</sup>

There are several factors which although often overshadowed in the economic history of South Carolina indicate that despite the dynamic effects of the invention of Whitney's cotton gin, and the issues of the Civil War, there inevitably would have developed a dual system of agriculture and industry in the South, concentrated in the Piedmont. Cotton mills naturally supplement the wealth of the cotton fields, and certain definite factors, intrinsic in the situation fostered the carrying-on of the two enterprises side by side, one with slave labor, the other with white artisans.

To those who are prone to think of the industrial South as an entirely new growth resulting from the effects of the Civil War, or to those who hold the popular misconception that the textile industry has been transplanted from a parent New England, the industrial history of South Carolina is illuminating.

<sup>1</sup> Tompkins, D. A., *The South In the Building of the Nation*, p. 9.

We are apt to remember the complete and picturesque plantation system, where slaves sometimes made the coarsest of cloth for their own clothing, and to forget that in the humble homes of ninety-one per cent <sup>2</sup> of the white population lived many a Silas Marner whose heritage in Old England had been the skilled craft of manufacturing fine textiles. It was not uncommon for a plantation with waterpower to undertake the initial processes of manufacturing, and to send out the weaving into the simple homes of the Scotch-Irish immigrants, born and bred in industrial Great Britain.

Among the earliest settlers in South Carolina were many indentured white servants with which England supplied labor to her colonial plantations. In the cultivation of tobacco the Cavaliers needed an abundance of cheap labor, and bond servants met the demand. Political prisoners were sometimes deported to the plantations to serve out their terms, while impoverished people who had no money for their passage voluntarily sold their services in return for transportation. When the demand for labor was acute, children were kidnapped in the slums of British seaports and sold into service on the American and other colonial plantations.

Thus South Carolina, early in its history, acquired a reservoir of cheap white labor, destined for the most part, to become an economic misfit during the years in which the invention of the cotton gin deflected capital and executive ability into the exclusive cultivation of cotton, an enterprise for which African labor was peculiarly adapted.

From the days of 1748, when the English Lords of Trade required Governor Glen of the Carolina colony to report on the volume of manufacturing in the province the introduction of the textile industry appeared intermittently as a political issue among the makers of the state until the subject was eclipsed by the issues of the Sixties.

<sup>1</sup> Census, 1850.

The advantages and disadvantages of manufacturing versus exclusive exportation of raw cotton were frequently debated throughout the entire South. John Randolph denounced the establishment of cotton mills, which he said "would bring yellow fever, not in August merely but from June to January, and from January to June."<sup>1</sup> In South Carolina Langdon Cheves stated with vehemence that the mills would "serve no interests but those of the capitalists who set them in motion,"<sup>2</sup> while the sentiment of John C. Calhoun is recorded in the words, "it is better for us that our cotton should go out in yarn and goods than in the raw state."<sup>3</sup>

At least four times legislative action to promote manufacturing in the province was taken, for there were many who wished to become commercially as well as politically free from the mother country. In 1770 a committee to "establish and promote manufacturing in the province, and to circulate petitions to raise money was appointed."<sup>4</sup>

In 1789 inventors' privileges were sought by Hugh Templeton, who had drafted plans for a spinning machine of eighty-four spindles.<sup>5</sup>

In 1795 the General Assembly passed an Act that "a lottery be drawn . . . and the profits used for manufacture," as a result of which four hundred pounds were intrusted to one William McClure to erect a factory to manufacture Manchester wares, "provided that he shall employ and instruct seven white persons seven years."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Watson, E. J., *Handbook of South Carolina*, p. 408.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> Pickney, G. M., *Life of John C. Calhoun*, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Kohn, August, *The Cotton Mills of South Carolina*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

In 1808 the House of Representatives passed a resolution that all members should appear during the session in suits of domestic manufacture,<sup>1</sup>—an action contemporary with the building of the South Carolina Home Spun Company in Charleston, the most pretentious industrial undertaking up to that time.

In 1809 money was appropriated by the Legislature to Ephriam McBride to enable him to construct a spinning machine on the principles of the patent which he held from the United States.<sup>2</sup> This was to be repaid.

Public sentiment was stirred and discussion stimulated by occasional rumors that certain English manufacturers were planning to move their mills to the American cotton fields. Although this did not materialize to any great extent, in 1790 a small band of English weavers and spinners did establish their eighty-four spindle mill for the manufacture of fine cloths on the Santee River near Statesburg.<sup>3</sup> Thus they gave to South Carolina the recognized birthday of a real machine industry for the manufacture of textiles, and provided a stimulus for the Scotch-Irish immigration of 1798.

To the textile workers of Great Britain, fervent in their desire for religious freedom and political independence, anxious to escape the turmoil of the Irish rebellion, and fretting under the injustices of the penal system, news of industrial opportunity in South Carolina seemed, indeed, to offer escape from all oppression.

The war of 1812 resulted in a great falling-off of exports from America to England. In 1809, 373,000 bales of raw cotton were exported, and in 1813 only 72,069.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the war and the embargo placed upon the importa-

<sup>1</sup> Kohn, August, *The Cotton Mills of South Carolina*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Watson, E. J., *Handbook of South Carolina*, p. 30.

tion of foreign-made goods gave a great impetus to cotton manufacturing in this country. The high price of cotton cloth attracted investors to textile manufacture at the very moment when the restrictions on foreign trade encouraged the withdrawal of capital from shipbuilding.

The first mills in South Carolina were, for the most part, built in the coastal section of the State, on small water powers, but after the war of 1812 had centered attention on the question of home industry, and as the colony spread out into its hinterland, the water powers of the Piedmont section began to be developed. In 1815 three manufacturers from Providence, R. I. sailed down to Charleston, secured wagons there, hauled their textile machinery two hundred and fifty miles over rough roads into the interior, and, almost with their own hands erected their mill of 700 spindles, the first textile plant in the Piedmont.<sup>1</sup>

This event is of special interest in general because it marked the first utilization of the water powers of the Piedmont, a locality now prophesied by many to become the true textile Alsace-Lorraine of America, and, in particular, because in this interpretation of the cotton-mill people, the descendants of one of the pioneers, Mr. Leonard Hill, play a part.

While the persistent growth and spread of small mills throughout South Carolina were answering the futility of political arguments against the establishment of home industry, England jealously guarded her manufacturing industries at home. She restricted the exportation of any textile machinery to America until 1815 when she put a loom on the American market, one year after Lowell had invented his power loom, independent of English models.<sup>2</sup>

In this connection, it will be remembered that when Samuel

<sup>1</sup> Landrum, J. B. O., *History of Spartanburg County*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Copeland, Melvin, *Cotton Manufacturing Industry of U. S.*, p. 6.

Slater came to Rhode Island in 1790 he was forbidden to bring any plans and models with him, and from memory he reproduced the machines used in "The First American Cotton Mill."

In 1846 the first *big* mill, 8400 spindles and 300 looms, in South Carolina was built at Graniteville by Mr. William Gregg.<sup>1</sup> Three phases of this enterprise deserve mention because they perfectly illustrate policies that have become characteristic of the industry. First, the mill was built with local capital by a successful business man, not an experienced manufacturer. Second, around it was developed a mill village, the first of which there is descriptive record. Third, the builder was forced to take at least one-half of the stock himself in the attempt of the legislature to fix individual responsibility in place of corporate control.

By 1860 the cotton-mill movement had expanded to such an extent that no one could deny that the manufacture of cotton cloth was supplementing the raising of cotton. The newer mills were larger and better equipped. A real factory system was gaining its feet.

In the mills of the low country some negro labor was used, although the records seem to indicate that most of the spinning and weaving done by the negroes was limited to a craft scale on the plantation. With labor of this kind one or two outstanding experiments failed, and as machinery became more intricate and was speeded up, the attempt to develop the negro into a skilled textile operative was abandoned. From the beginning the Piedmont mills seem to have been manned by white labor.

The importance and the interest in these original textile enterprises scattered as isolated units up and down the streams of South Carolina would be confined to economic history, except for their influence upon the sociological

<sup>1</sup> Kohn, August, *Cotton Mills of South Carolina*, p. 36.

factors in the cotton-mill situation today. Not only did they inculcate into the South the idea of the possibilities of cotton manufacturing but they attracted white labor, to whom weaving and spinning had been a means of livelihood in Great Britain, thus creating a labor situation which became most favorable to the success of the later day cotton-mill movement.

As small units carried on strictly by individual enterprise, the early mills fell heir to the "ingrained and living social morality," of the old plantation system. Herein may lie the genesis of the responsibility felt by employer for employee at the cotton mills. Certain it is that the executive ability which carried on big plantations could easily be diverted into the management of an early cotton mill, while from custom the owner's active interest embraced all the activities connected with his business.

Thus by 1860 the cotton-mill industry was actually established in South Carolina, sister enterprise to agriculture and creating a dual system of wealth which placed the state third in the per-capita wealth of the United States. The size and the number of the mills were small in comparison with the significance indicated by their presence concentrated in the Piedmont, their expression of individual enterprise, and their social influence. The advantages of manufacturing had gained recognition, but full utilization of them was not to be until after the Reconstruction period of the Sixties.

Eleven of the eighteen mills in South Carolina escaped destruction in the Civil War. Nine of the eleven were in Spartanburg and Greenville Counties. In the chaos of the period the development of more plants lay dormant until the movement of 1880, when, in the words of the South's own beloved Henry W. Grady, the section awoke to find "her jewel in the toad's head of defeat."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grady, Henry W., *The New South*, p. 46.

## CHAPTER III

### RECENT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

FOR fifteen years after the cessation of the Civil War, the cotton-mill movement in South Carolina lay submerged under the ruins of the old economic system and the melee of a disrupted social order.

Then in the same spirit of wisdom and courage with which Robert E. Lee turned to mend his broken South, an unusually able group of men came forward to build up and guide the present-day textile industry. Deans in this school of pioneer manufacturers were Mr. D. A. Tompkins—whose field of influence was by no means limited to North Carolina—Mr. D. E. Converse, Captain Ellison A. Smyth, Colonel J. P. Hammett, and Captain J. H. Montgomery. Without experience as manufacturers, they blazed the trail through a maze “of unsolved problems greater than the Anglo-Saxon race had ever faced;”<sup>1</sup> in a district, “the most impoverished ever occupied by an English people.”<sup>2</sup>

The story of the building of each mill is a fascinating tale of adventure, and living today is many a man who can relate with the vivid charm of autobiography his active part in the creation of a mill, the moulding and forging of an entire industrial community from a few thousand dollars of capital. Such an industrial romance is sketched later in the attempt to interpret its social significance. Here are epitomized only the outstanding features of the cotton-mill movement from its emergence about 1880 until the present, a period of forty-

<sup>1</sup> Edmunds, R., *The South's Amazing Progress*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Shaler, H., *The Neighbor*, p. 332.



five years, in which the number of cotton mills in South Carolina has increased from 14 in 1880 to more than 200 in 1925.

Behind the development of the textile industry stood a homogeneous people determined to express their economic community of interest in cotton mills. The Atlanta Exposition in 1881 centered around textile possibilities and stimulated both individual enterprise and a very generous community bidding for mills. Newspapers lent their hearty support to the promotion, and men who had the confidence of their neighbors and recognized ability or strong financial connections were pushed forward to build a mill. In the community bidding for mills a small town would frequently promise capital "chipped in" by the residents, and land at a nominal price.

The majority of mills were built with local capital, a good share of which was attracted from Charleston to the Piedmont, although in the wave of great expansion about the first of the twentieth century Eastern capital was invested by the New England manufacturers of textile machinery, and by the New York dry-goods commission houses.

Management of the mills has been for the most part by local men, and the customary residence of a chief executive officer in the village has mitigated the evils of absentee landlordism.

As late as 1919 only thirteen cities in South Carolina exceeded a population of ten thousand. This lack of urban centers in which to locate his mill and find his labor supply forced each manufacturer to seek out his own industrial site, usually a water power, and to build up around it a complete village system for the housing and accommodation of his employees.

Tied in with this situation was an absence of transportation facilities. More important than the commercial effect

of such isolation has been the enforced erection of mill villages on an extensive scale, and the use of the entire family, rather than the individual as the unit of employment. However, it would be a mistake to explain by the mill-village system alone the reason for family employment. The custom of the people, their attitude toward work, and undeveloped opportunities in other occupations all play a part.

In the first ten years of the twentieth century the textile industry caught a new spirit. Instead of individual enterprises, struggling with the problems of mere existence, the entire mill population, employers and employees alike, began to feel a group consciousness and to be recognized as an American industry. Personal relationships between employer and employee crystallized into the beginning of social legislation, and a few localities experienced the first activities of organized labor.

1905 was marked by a temporary shortage of labor. Pessimists feared that the South had built more cotton mills than she could man, but time has proven that the shortage occurred because sufficient labor had not awakened from its lethargy or had not learned of the industrial opportunity.

In conjunction with the commercial interests trying to revive the port of Charleston, the manufacturers tried an experiment of importing four hundred and seventy-six foreign operatives from Austria and Belgium in 1906. Everyone concerned was dissatisfied, and the movement petered out.

Labor scouts were sent by certain mills into the back districts of the Blue Ridge Mountains and a great influx of labor from that reservoir was aroused.

By 1906 the cotton-mill people, identified by many characteristics of poverty and a retarded progress, had by number and general likeness conspicuously asserted themselves as a new strain of society. While the mill villages did not create the easy-going attitude of their people toward child

labor, early marriage, school attendance, and other related subjects, they did centralize and intensify these social factors to such a degree that the manufacturers recognized the need to improve them, and a collective effort toward that end was made by the Manufacturers' Association of South Carolina in 1906.<sup>1</sup>

To explain is not to excuse the misfortunes which befell this attempt to raise standards by legislation. Simultaneously with the manufacturers' recognition of the needs of a new class came the awakening of the politicians to the presence of a new constituency. A backward public opinion was both fed and fed upon by demagogues, blating of personal liberty, advocating a pain-economy taxation, the right of a "poor but honest" man to defense against class legislation. The way in which Cole Blease, by eloquence and oratory, rode into office on the vote of the mill and rural people is a notorious illustration of this. Discouraged by the lack of support given to progressive social measures, those interested in the public welfare came to look upon legislation as a futile means, and based their hope upon the gradual development of an enlightened public opinion, and the fruits of the socialization of the rank and file of the people.

Manufacturers went after results by establishing schools, in most of which compulsory school attendance was enforced as a local measure long before the State Act was passed. They undertook programs of sanitation and hygiene and public health; by developing social centers and playgrounds a clean, enjoyable adolescence was substituted for the dearth of social activities which promoted premature marriage and other undesirable practices.

<sup>1</sup>The text of the Manufacturers' Memorial to the House of Representatives in 1906 is quoted later (p. —) in the discussion of social legislation.

To understand the feeling of social responsibility which the makers of the New Industrial South assumed it should ever be borne in mind that the builders of the cotton mills were not primarily manufacturers; they were the builders of a new State. They had to see things in terms of a new commonwealth. Those men were the product of a time of grave responsibility toward questions of public concern. Philanthropy and welfare work as such were not within their apperception. "From everyone according to his ability, to each according to his needs" was the unescapable spirit of the program of reconstruction. Real neighborliness was untarnished in those days, and relationships were on a man-to-man basis. Getting things onto their feet for the ultimate good of all was the goal toward which the builders worked. To the masthead of the new craft which they launched they nailed their banner "*Noblesse Oblige* which has so largely dominated the development of Southern life,"<sup>1</sup> and which is perhaps the richest contribution of the Old South to New.

In the first years of the twentieth century began the era of active child-labor discussion in South Carolina. Unfortunate, indeed, was it that into this reform were injected sectional prejudices, harsh notes of censure, some half truths and many sensational exaggerations, until even fair-minded men, previously attempting to right the wrong, were impassioned to defend on general principles the very conditions which they themselves had recognized and marked for correction. If the psychological factors involved had come in for due consideration in the long discussion, no doubt the later record of Federal Child Labor regulation in the South would be written in terms of co-operation and success. Perhaps too much was expected so early in the complete transition of a people. Perhaps the industry had too recently emerged from a long period of metamorphosis. A little

<sup>1</sup> Edgar Gardner Murphy, *The Present South*, 1904, p. 7.

more tact and diplomacy might well have been used to lubricate the situation.

"In Carolina," says Bancroft, "the disputes of a thousand years were crowded into a generation," and into the very warp and woof of the history of the cotton mills has been woven some phase of them all.

Since 1920 life in the mill village has shared in the general twentieth-century change. We have the auto and the movies and the radio, the lipstick and the boyish bob. We have an almost overwhelming complexity of old customs and old standards with new ways and new ideas. We still have people coming from the mountains, we have boys and girls going out to college. At the office we hear of labor turnover, personnel service, large-scale production, and group insurance. Co-operating with the efforts of the mill as a private agency are State and County Boards of Welfare, while social barriers heretofore stigmatizing the cotton-mill people are breaking down—but to interpret here is to anticipate.

Summarizing: The water powers, the climate, the proximity to cotton field and coal mine, the labor supply available, and the native business ability to utilize them have contributed to the New South a textile industry concentrated in the Piedmont. Within its mill villages are localized a homogeneous people, awakening from a long arrested development. Individual differences are strong among them, and capacity embraces a wide range of variability. Some individuals under observation seem to indicate the creation of a permanent industrial class, but others who went to school only under compulsion have developed into teachers, while some who were forced to be vaccinated are now graduate nurses.

However, instead of generalizing let us turn to concrete facts and illustrations. To review them against the history of a typical mill is to discover human values and to really catch the social significance of cotton-mill life.

## CHAPTER IV

### A CHAPTER OF BEGINNINGS

THE "Spartanburg Herald" of December 9th, 1899 carried this front-page article, quoted to illustrate the community urge, the newspaper support, the method of capitalization, the size of the mill, and the kind of man entrusted with the development of the industry, features previously referred to as characteristic of the development of the cotton mills.

### ANOTHER NEW MILL

Mr. Jno. A. Law, of the Savings Bank, is at the head of the Enterprise.

Two Hundred Thousand Dollars Capital.

Owing to the prompt and decisive action of a few of Spartanburg's most prominent business men, and a ready response on the part of others, a new cotton mill of about 10,000 spindles is almost assured to "Greater Spartanburg."

It is unnecessary to say that such an enterprise will be welcomed. The people here know by practical experience the accompanying benefits, the value of mill stocks as investments, and the advantages offered by this locality to such organizations.

A Corporation of \$200,000 capital is contemplated. Of this amount Spartanburg is asked to furnish \$100,000. While she has gained a wide reputation as a cotton mill center, many new mills have recently been organized at various other points in Piedmont South Carolina. If Spartanburg is to maintain her supremacy, she must continue to add to the number of her mills. Since the building of Spartanburg's latest mill, the Arkwright,

new manufacturing companies have been organized in Greenville, Anderson, Union, Columbia, Gaffney, Jonesville, Pickens and Belton. Unquestionably it is the sentiment of this community that the time has arrived to launch another mill enterprise, particularly when Spartanburg capital is being solicited, and obtained for similar enterprises elsewhere.

Mr. Jno. A. Law, the cashier of the Spartanburg Savings Bank, is at the head of this movement.

And editorially:

### THE NEW COTTON MILL

Everybody realizes that the time has come for Spartanburg to build a new mill. It is Spartanburg's way to have the enterprise assured before talking about it. This mill is assured, but it rests with the people to say how big it will be.

Of the twenty-four mills in this county already, all are paying and most of them are giving magnificent returns to stockholders. This is a fact so well known that it needs only to be shown that the management is in proper hands to make a new mill a certainty.

Mr. Jno. A. Law, who is at the head of this enterprise, is one of the sort of young men the people of Spartanburg have always delighted to entrust with big enterprises. He has the confidence, the esteem and the best wishes of everybody, and the business community realizes, from twelve years of experience in the banks, that he has the stuff in him to make one of the most successful mill men of this particularly successful community.

By nature, training and associations, Mr. Law has the promise of a brilliant career, and he starts this enterprise with the solid support of all factions and the best backing that can be given a local undertaking. It is bound to be a success, and it will greatly aid the project and its possibilities for future growth and development, if the home people will respond promptly and liberally. We must keep this city in the forefront as a cotton manufacturing center.

"Who's Who in America" and other biographical sketches tell us that Mr. Law was born in Spartanburg, the son of a Presbyterian minister. He graduated from Wofford, the local Methodist college, and went into secretarial work in the railway service. After a few years of experience he returned to Spartanburg and rapidly climbed the rounds of the ladder in a country bank. Then he built the Saxon Mills.

That the editorial prophecy as to the success of his manufacturing career is fulfilled is shown by his office of President of the American Cotton Manufacturers Association, 1917; original member of National Industrial Conference Board, 1917; Chairman of the State Board of Conciliation, 1916; officer of the National Council of Cotton Manufacturers, 1917 and 1921; and member of the Organizing Committee and the Executive Committee of the Cotton-Textile Institute, 1926. Many other civic and educational and business positions also biographically recorded show Mr. Law to be an outstanding example of the high position which men of superior ability and character, whether primarily manufacturers or not, have had to occupy as builders of the New South.

In 1899 transportation in the Piedmont was equestrian. When banking hours were over the young cashier would set forth on horseback to seek out a site for the mill, which was assuming capitalization. Parenthetically Mr. Law's horses, because of their constant companionship with him, and because of their own service to the mill, have taken their places as real characters in the history of the community, and "Lady," the Kentucky mare, who carried the payroll and mail for eighteen years, enjoyed speaking acquaintance from every man, woman and child in the village until her death only four years ago.

As a site for the mill, a place where the railroad and a



stream were adjacent was desired, and a mile and a half beyond the city limits of Spartanburg, Saxon was located, on the crest of one hundred and eighty acres of a partly wooded rolling tract.

The mill itself, originally a four-story brick building, was designed by Lockwood, Greene & Company, of Boston, who up to that time had designed the great majority of the successful cotton mills of the South. The mill was erected by day labor, with local masons and carpenters.

The village, although an exigency of the labor situation, was considered from the first as a community of homes, and not a mere housing proposition. This was not a new or isolated thought about mill villages, and was expressed in its fullest expansion by one thoughtful observer who said to the young executive just breaking ground, "In the development of your enterprise I envy you the opportunities you will have to stamp your personality upon the community you are building." "The idea of stamping my personality upon an unsuspecting community had never occurred to me before," Mr. Law now says, "and I went home sick at the thought." It was, indeed, a staggering responsibility to be assumed by the "boy President," as he had been dubbed by the old Nestor of Spartanburg.

However, the people of Saxon Mills tell with affectionate pride that twenty-three years ago their president moved out to the mill. His children have been born and reared there. Years of neighborliness and daily contact have promoted mutual confidence, and the situation is wholesome and inspiring. It is worthy of serious attention from those who are earnest in their desire to create or to preserve harmonious relationships between employer and employee.

As soon as the walls of the mill were started, village streets were laid off, trees were conserved and planted, hedges set out and garden plots allowed for. Similarity without monotony was sought and obtained.

Within a few weeks forty houses of four types had been completed. As soon as one was finished a family would move in, eager to help the masons or the carpenters, or to put down machinery, or to "tote water buckets," as a few of the men now at work in the mill speak with pride of having done then as barefoot boys.

Within a short time there was a sufficient number of families living in the little community to make imperative the need of a base of supplies, just as an army encampment needs its canteen or commissary. Community urge pushed the completion of the store, which was built only after considerable discussion of the matter by the Board of Directors of the mill. It is significant to note in passing that the only experienced manufacturer on the board strongly advised against building and operating the store by the company, his idea being that it was more trouble than it was worth, and that the best plan would be to put up a building and rent it to a merchant. Personally he did not care to be accused of taking away the people's wages, and at his own mill he had shifted the responsibility of the stores to tradesmen. However, the store was built and operated by the company, and has become a center of convenience, with its public telephone, its agency for the city laundry and its postoffice substation.

Before all the houses were full, or the mill in actual operation, a desire for some place of religious meeting was expressed by the people to the management, who had had in mind the building of a rather handsome community church. At this early request from the operatives the partitions in a six-room house were knocked down to provide a temporary church, and a joint committee to take charge of the religious services was appointed by the president of the mill from all the denominations represented in the village. By the unanticipated advice of his father, a Presbyterian minister of long experience and great breadth of vision, Mr. Law gave

up his idea of building a church, and awaited further voluntary approach from the people, who were mostly Baptists and Methodists.

One of the stockholders of the mill, who was a strong pillar of the Baptist Church in the city of Spartanburg, expressed his wish to establish a church at the mill on a mission basis. This had been done in some places, but was discouraged in the Saxon Mills community.

In the meantime all went merrily on in the little improvised chapel, the denominations alternating in the conduct of the services, until a Methodist evangelist arrived to hold a series of meetings. Within a few days the president of the mill was approached by the Baptist committeemen who complained that the Baptist pastor was not being asked to take any part in the meeting. The Methodist representatives were sent for and an agreement was reached that their evangelist should enlist the aid of his Baptist brother. That night the service went on well towards its conclusion, but no chance was given for the utterance of Baptist prayer or exhortation. Then arose old Mr. Littlejohn, patriarch and cornerstone of the Baptist contingency. In quiet wrath likewise arose all the other Baptists. In dignified silence they strode out. The president of the mill was again approached and the committee was again called together. Consequently the Presiding Elder of the Methodist District was requested to withdraw the evangelist from the village, where it was not intended "to have our people arrayed against each other on any issue, whether under the guise of religion or what not," words of their president which have become tradition in this little community, and have been quoted to me by members of both denominations as the foundation upon which rests the parochial peace of the place.

Within a few months the Baptists expressed a desire for a church of their own. In conference with the president of

the mill it was decided that it would be a fine thing for the congregation and their friends to build the church themselves, the mill merely giving a building lot in the center of the village, which was to revert to the mill if not used for religious purposes. The president offered personally to give one-tenth of whatever amount the committee might raise. In 1901 the Baptist church membership was thirteen. By 1904 it had slightly increased and they completed their church at a cost of \$1,200.

The Methodists completed their church about the same time under a similar plan. Parsonages free from rent were provided for each denomination by the mill.

Birth and death made early appearance in the little settlement, showing how complete are human experiences within a small circumference, and how imperative is the need to arrange to meet them.

The textile industry is not a hazardous one, requiring constant surgical attention to operatives, but human needs of the inhabitants of the village call for medical skill, within quicker reach than was afforded by carriage travel from the nearby city, and a physician was welcomed into the community. He has never had an official position with the company. He enjoys a wide practice in the country and nearby mill villages while sharing the local field with some ten or twelve physicians, any one of whom may be used by the company to best suit an emergency, or by the village people, according to their preferences.

The first death was that of an old man. A custom of the country asserted itself in a way that might not have been expected and the result of which certainly has been misunderstood in some critical quarters. All through the South today one sees the relics of the little family burying grounds, not only on the big plantations, but on the land of the small farm owner. Church yards there were too, but the public cemetery

was not much used, certainly not to the extent of custom by the country people. This was not from lack of money; it was sentiment and the amelioration of the separation by burying the loved one in nearby familiar surroundings. And so when death came to the mill village it was a spontaneous expression of a folkway which impelled the family of the deceased to ask permission from the mill authorities to bury their dead "on the place." Thus was set aside the little cemetery at Saxon which has indeed become hallowed ground to the community as shown by the care and beautification given it by the self-managed Cemetery Association. In some localities where the mill did not set aside a cemetery the nearby churches felt themselves greatly imposed upon in the use of their ancient church yards by the new mill population which had no previous affiliations there.

This is the story of the building of a community where the scale of human needs runs the entire keyboard. It tells of simple things, because there is no escape from them wherever people work and play and live together.

Contributing much to the situation was the mountaineer, winding his way down from Tennessee and North Carolina to the new mill. Family and worldly goods were in the white-topped prairie schooner, drawn by mule or horse. Always a dingy lantern swung beneath the wagon. Always the hound trotted sullenly behind, and usually "Son" led the cow along. Families coming from the country also brought their hogs and chickens into the village, for to part with these domestic possessions would have been to cut off a main source of accustomed food supply, and to have made life in a mill village seem harsh and foreign. So pastures and piggeries and chicken coops took their place in the manufacture of cotton cloth, although many rows ensued between families who wished to tie the cow under the porch, and an enlightened management which had more modern ideas about

public health. Only threat of dismissal from the village even now influences many a person to keep his live stock in the community pastures, one of which is conveniently located on each of the four corners of the village.

Among the seventy-two families which had congregated at Saxon Mills by 1902 there were seventeen families, among them four of the management, which wished to have a school established for their children. Tuition was fixed at twenty-five cents per pupil per week and a teacher was engaged. Six of the seventeen families failed to pay the tuition fees, but school was conducted for four months, a term quite usual throughout the state at that time.

This private school was a necessity because the rural school district in which the mill found itself located was too poor and too inadequately equipped to take care of the increased population occasioned by the erection of the mill. Moreover then, as now, the standards of the county schools fell short of the standards of the mill. The county school was in a miserable one-room building, with home-made desks, no blackboards, and was ungraded in classes or ages of the pupils.

The next step was affiliation between the private school in the mill village and the public county school, the mill proposing to erect a modern building in the village, to take care of all the children in the district, to lengthen the term of the school, to increase the number of teachers and to supplement their salaries; all to be done under the supervision of the state school authorities. Costs above the public aid received by the district were to be borne by the mill. The proposition was accepted and the archaic educational provisions were absorbed in the beginnings of a modern system.

In 1907 when the Saxon Mills replaced its first small school house with Caston Hall (a forerunner of modern community buildings and equipment) the expense incurred was so far in advance of the sums generally expended for

educational facilities that considerable widespread comment of varying nature was occasioned.

Of the one hundred and fifty children then at Saxon under twelve years of age, one hundred and thirty-two enrolled in school but the average attendance was the miserable figure of sixty-five. The only explanation is parental indifference, coupled with the state-wide indisposition toward all compulsory school attendance requirements shown by the fact that as late as 1911 only 51.6% of all the persons of school age within the state were attending school.<sup>1</sup>

To meet popular demand in the village a barber shop next had to be opened. As had been suggested in the case of the store, this establishment was rented to an independent person. First one and then another tonsorial artist undertook the stand, his length of tenure being decided by the behavior of his clientele. If the barber could have arranged certain hours for those who wanted good service and high-class conduct and other hours for those who insisted upon convivial hospitality the history of the barber shop might have been more calm, but rioters were always trying to kick the barber out and matters rocked vividly along for almost twenty years. Then several of the younger men who had gained confidence in the community social center, and liked the atmosphere of conduct prevailing there, asked the mill authorities to take the barber shop into custody and locate it in the community building, which includes the school rooms, auditorium, club quarters, and other facilities for the social life of the village. So a social worker came to add a barber to her staff, an amusing situation, but full of sociological significance by reason of the attitude of the mill people. They know bad social conditions when they see them; moreover, they know what reform is practical and how best to bring it about. "Sensible" is their criterion and if

<sup>1</sup> Snowden, Yates, *History of South Carolina*, p. 1053.

impatient reformers can refrain from undue meddling and superimposing, the mill people can be trusted to work out their own problems. They will choose their "sensible" programs and policies, even while they reach out for leadership, and common sense is, after all, a very good social control.

Contemporary with the great expansion of the textile industry in South Carolina was a period of hot political elections. With sensational diligence Benjamin R. Tillman and Coleman L. Blease sought out every available vote and awoke the mill people to political activity. Saxon Mills became a voting precinct almost as soon as the mill was built. The earliest available record of the vote shows that in the election of 1904 eighty-eight votes were cast by a male population numbering one hundred and fifty.<sup>1</sup>

Thus was begun the creation of a typical cotton-mill village on the red clay hills of the Piedmont. A 10,000-spindle print cloth mill of red brick, four stories high, set on the crest of a hill was its nucleus. When the first piece of goods was delivered from the looms in 1901, around the mill was clustered a miniature village of fifty-three houses, the office, the store, two churches, a school house, a barber shop and the village pastures.

Of the fifty-three houses, five were overseers' houses of six rooms each, forty were operatives' cottages of four rooms each, six were six-room two-story houses, and two were six-room houses for the executives. These houses were designed according to five styles, not altogether dissimilar, and were built of wooden frame, clapboarded and painted gray and white. Each had a front and back porch. There was neither plumbing nor running water in any of them. Wells placed equi-distant in the blocks afforded the water supply (as well as centers of gossip). Provision

<sup>1</sup> *The Headlight*, August 30th, 1904.



for heating the houses was according to the custom of the country, fireplaces burning wood. Lighting was by kerosene lamps. All of this must be considered against the universally prevailing standards of the Nineties.

Around each house was a lot ninety feet by one hundred and ten feet. The front yard was often used for flowers and the back for gardening. The eight streets of the village were named for the directors of the mill. On one edge of the property, a little distance from the village, were built five negro houses for the day laborers.

A continuous program of enlargement and development has been pursued until at present the size of the mill is 41,000 spindles and the number of houses one hundred and sixty-eight, twenty-three of which, built in 1924, are the latest thing in bungalows. At the moment fifty more are in process of construction.

When the people began to use coal instead of wood to heat their houses the era of modern improvements had arrived. Now all of the houses are lighted with electricity, and all have running water in the kitchen. A sewerage system was started in 1910, and all the houses have bathrooms in which toilets have been installed, space being left for bathtubs, which have been installed in sixty houses. Sleeping porches have been added to two operatives' cottages, four overseers' houses and to three of the six houses of the executive officers. Upon every street are to be seen several garages. No house is more than five minutes' walk from the mill.

Village improvements have consisted of street lights, and street-car service to town, now amplified with taxis. The Piedmont & Northern Railway has a station in the village, and the Southern Railroad has a suburban depot within three minutes' walk. Other improvements are the building of a community educational and social center and playground, the transformation of one mill pond into a lake for swimming

and recreational purposes, and the beginning of a park system.

Closely identified with the village life is the vacation camp of the Saxon Mills, located on Lake Summit, at a distance of forty miles in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Reserving this topic for development under "Recreation," we now turn to the people who have had a hand in these beginnings. To some they have been the instruments of self-expression, to others they have been the first contact with social institutions or organized society.

## CHAPTER V

### COTTON-MILL PEOPLE

THREE streams of population-elements have merged in the mill village. There were the tenant farmers, the mountaineers, and the semi-industrial families who had already fitted themselves into work and life at the cotton mills. The presence of the negro also furnishes sociological interest.

The early mills were first manned by local labor, soon supplemented by a supply from the mountains.

The tenant farmer in 1909, with a landlord furnishing land, fertilizers, house, wood, also ginning and bagging and ties would make fifteen bales of cotton. He would get seven and one-half of these for his labor. At \$50.00 a bale \$375.00 would be realized. If this family had three hands it could earn in the cotton mills, on the lowest earning basis, \$900.00.<sup>1</sup> "Many farmers who live in comparative comfort do not handle \$200.00 a year,"<sup>2</sup> was written of them in 1906.

Newspapers and books were scarce, if present at all, on the farm. Family budgets were stripped to home-grown food, shelter without conveniences and a minimum of clothing.

There were six months of work in the fields, during two of which the cotton needed no attention, and six months of idleness after the crops had been gathered. Protracted meetings in the summer, or a political meeting at a nearby settlement in August and the occasional use of the fiddle and banjo in the winter afforded the social interest. In the fall and

<sup>1</sup> Kohn, August, *The Cotton Mills of South Carolina*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, Holland, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, p. 34.

winter 'possum and rabbit hunts were a popular diversion for the men and boys. The year round, much time was spent "in settin' and studyin' "—day dreaming—a habit which has been developed to the nth degree in rural communities of the South and which is hardly comprehensible to the New Englander, turning in fervid haste from one chore to another. Settin' and studyin' may be good conservation of energy, but it does not promote much self-improvement or the advance of worth-while conversation, which on the tenant farm limits itself to matters close at hand, or to the occasional discussion of a lurid "piece read in the paper."

Sometimes on a Saturday or a sales day at the court house, the whole family would drive to town in the farm wagon, fitted up for the occasion with straight-backed split-bottom chairs. Paw and Maw and the baby—always there was one and usually two—would sit on the driver's seat in solemn listlessness, ameliorated, for them, by Paw's chaw of ter-backer and Maw's plentiful use of her snuff. The older children, with perhaps Grandmaw or Grandpaw sat bolt upright on the chairs, the girls taking long, sly peeps from underneath slatted calico sunbonnets, while the boys gave frank wide-eyed scrutiny to each new sight along the way, perhaps the chaingang working the road, a stylish equipage from town, or a mill village through which they were passing.

Usually no detail *there* escaped close attention from the whole family. Keen interest was aroused, for friend or kinsman had gone to live at the mill, and even they themselves might "take a notion" to move there later on, especially if the crop failed or when the children were big—or numerous—enough to work. Such thoughts, however, aroused mingled emotions for Paw knows that though he is "pore" he is honest, and he has never humbled himself to the authority of any boss. At the mills, he has heard, the overseer expects a body to work mighty nigh every day. Of course the chil-

dren, especially the girls, could earn a right smart, but—" Oh, well, t'aint no use to worry, time will settle the matter somehow."

Maw, being only a woman, hardly dares or considers it worth while to have her thoughts about the cotton mill. As things are, she can get a good bit of time to work in the fields after the house work and the milking and churning and washing are done. At the mill she could only keep house—but then maybe 'Granny would min' the young'uns and she herself could go into the mill and weave. As a child she had helped work the pedal of the old home loom and knew a good bit about making cloth. For weaving in the mill she could draw her own ticket, and with her own wages select things from the boundless variety on the shelves of the company store. But then, some said mill folks was dirty; besides it sure would be bad to have the girls marry among the factory folks, and neither it wouldn't hardly do to have the least ones known as "cotton tops."

The children, on the other hand, have no wavering ideas about going to the cotton mill. They are the spirit of youth, eager for conquest with the new, universally reaching out from isolation to embrace the challenge of the world.

This was the country type. Deviating sharply from it were the down-and-outs, the neer-do-wells, squatting in one-room cabins, dirty, ambitionless, sapped of physical vitality, eeking out mere existence as parasites on the economic and social order up to the demands of which they had never measured.

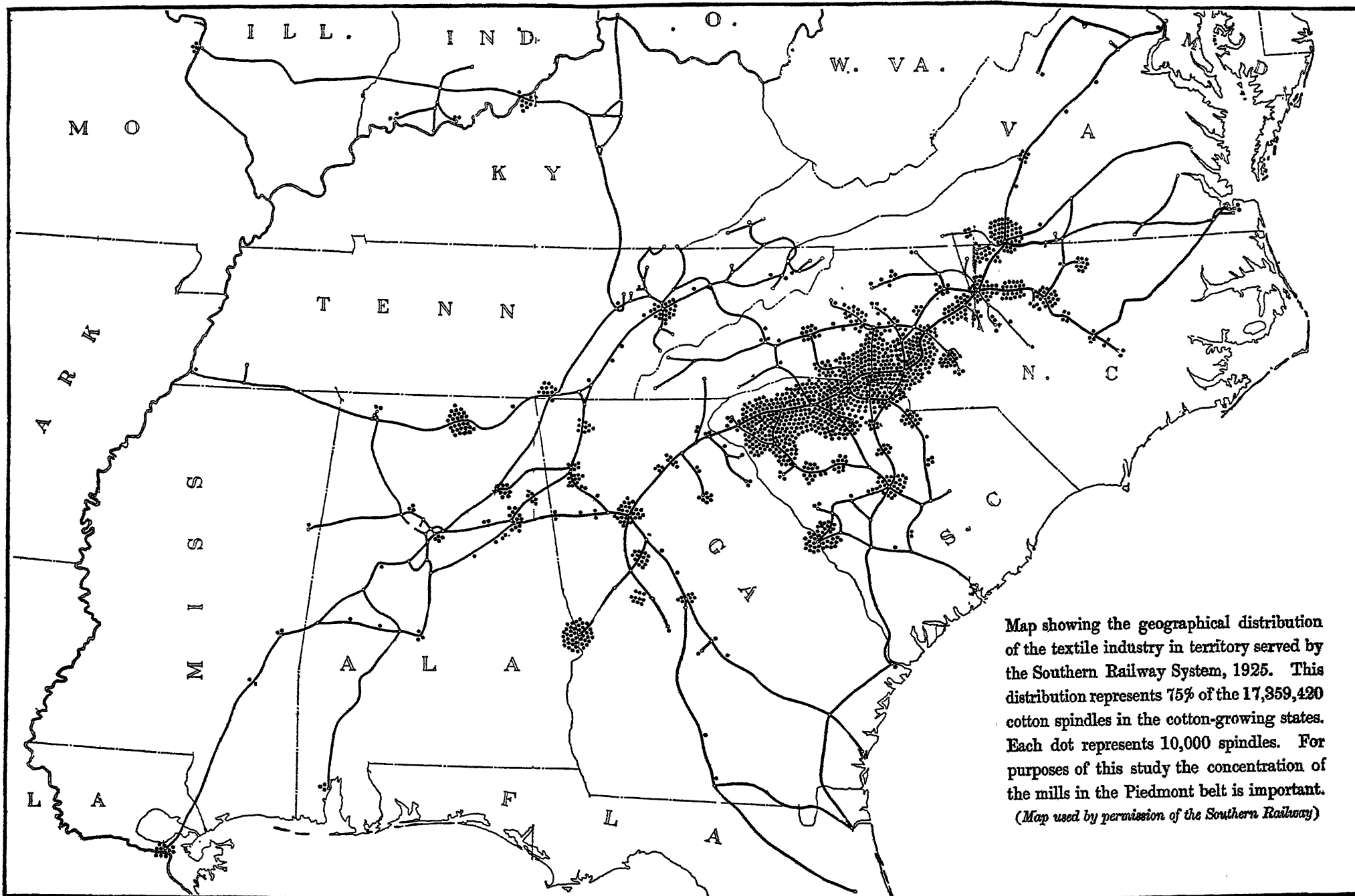
Their origin has sometimes been attributed to the indentured white servants of colonial times, or to the human wrecks shipped by England to her colonies. But whether their antecedents were prototype of these people, or whether these were the victims of an agricultural system which had forced them into degeneration by its exclusion of a servile

white class is not for our decision. As clay-eaters, or crackers, or sand-lappers they dragged themselves to the cotton mills and in mute appeal begged the industry to make what it could of them.

They were despised alike by the laboring whites and blacks, and it was mainly their presence, conspicuous because sensational, rather than in the majority, which stigmatized cotton-mill work and created prejudice against the mill people. If there had been almshouses this class would have flocked to their doors, if there had been relief agencies their records would have crowded the files, if there had been a "Jukes" family reunion they would have sat at the head table. Nomads, they went in and out of towns and villages, their constant motion giving the impression that their number was legion. They spoke of themselves as mill folks, just as tramps always refer to their avocation. The self-respecting, industrious mill people conducted themselves inconspicuously and let others create the impressions. The cotton mills did not produce the neer-do-wells, but into their villages hastened these people, feebly aware that refuge and new hope might somehow be extended to them in the rise of the new order.

In the prosperity of the New South, which has created money for institutions and agencies and programs of social work, this class has undergone much absorption and some transition.

Diametrically contrasted with this strain in the population is the other extreme, the ambitious family looking expectantly to the future and going to the mill to take advantage of steady employment, better educational opportunities and higher standards of living. By this or that trick of fortune their heritage had been stripped. Barren opportunities had submerged but not defeated their previous culture, and an innate refinement remained. This together with good blood and an established name, often of prominence in the State,



Map showing the geographical distribution of the textile industry in territory served by the Southern Railway System, 1925. This distribution represents 75% of the 17,359,420 cotton spindles in the cotton-growing states. Each dot represents 10,000 spindles. For purposes of this study the concentration of the mills in the Piedmont belt is important.  
(Map used by permission of the Southern Railway)

awaited re-birth into its right. A remote connection with better things asserted itself as a decision to regain them.

This is the choicest vein in the population, yet all of the ore does not stand up under test in the melting pot and the product is not always superior to that from the stratum that "just took a notion" to move to the mill.

Less interesting than these elements in the mill population is the kind of family which turned to industry in order to escape competition with free negro labor in the fields. This stimulation for their transition illustrates rather well their psychological set. They think, but their thought is in negative terms. They are not indifferent to the passing times but they are not constructive. They are Democrats because they would not be Republicans, they are Protestants because they would not be anything else, they adopt the triple K because of its program of Shall Nots. They vote to defeat rather than to promote. Perhaps we had best say they are anti-social. It is this element which presents the real challenge to education and to the enlightenment of public opinion.

These are rough characterizations of the population element which came to the mills from the adjacent farm lands. To confine each family within one classification based on them would be equally impossible and valueless, for in the mill village, as everywhere else, family attributes are elastic. Their contraction and expansion is in jagged lines, and stages of development overlap or fall short rather than dovetail. Lines of adherence which might seem to tend in one direction show peculiar obstinacies and strange breaks. Moreover, the members of a family present a strong individualism within an individualism.

Migration to the mill was a greater experience for the mountaineer than it was for the farmers living close at hand. The latter were accustomed to shifting about from one tenancy to another; they had seen the mills built by the home



folks; and trying life in the mill village for a few weeks would involve no steps of permanency.

The mountaineer, on the other hand, usually owned his little mountain farm and parting with it was breaking real home ties. To him the cotton mills were owned by "fur-riners," and "the ways of the folks South were quare." The water was piped in the mill village and was reported not to be as good as that from the mountain springs. The journey itself required several days and nights in the white-topped mountain wagon, or a ride on the strange and dangerous "Iron Horse."

Hence, industrial opportunity at the cotton mill has been a call answered in the mountains mainly by the courageous and the self-reliant. This would be entirely so had it not been for the persuasion of the labor scouts who about 1900 almost depopulated certain mountain districts.

The people of our Southern Highlands, a territory lying in nine Southern states and nearly as large as the combined area of New England and New York have been made a field of special study by the historian, the ethnologist and the sociologist.

We read Roosevelt <sup>1</sup> and Fiske <sup>2</sup> and are fired with patriotic admiration for the frontiersman of the Appalachian mountains. We read of the Wautauga Association, King's Mountain and the Mecklenburg Declaration and better understand the spirit which the mountaineer has brought to the mill. We read Kephart <sup>3</sup> and Sharp <sup>4</sup> and Furman <sup>5</sup> to discover in the isolation of these rugged mountains, wrapped in soft blue haze, our contemporary ancestors, speaking purer English than the English, and more uniformly American

<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore, *The Winning of the West*.

<sup>2</sup> Fiske, John, *Old Virginia and Her Neighbors*.

<sup>3</sup> Kephart, Horace, *Our Southern Highlanders*.

<sup>4</sup> Sharp, Cecil, *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians*.

<sup>5</sup> Furman, Lucy, *The Quare Women*.

than the inhabitants of any other part of America. These people are but imperfectly known in song and story, too much of which has to do with feud and moonshine.

The most accurate and scholarly authority is "The Southern Highlander and His Homeland," written by John C. Campbell for the Russell Sage Foundation.<sup>1</sup> He has caught the romance and the promise of the land. He knows the causes and the results of the first migrations of 1750, of Daniel Boone's expedition, of the use and importance of Revolutionary trails and of the arrested development of the mountain people since 1850. Attitudes and conduct are interpreted as well as recorded by Campbell and in this study the true mountaineer is revealed to us in terms of history and economics and human nature. To one who has ridden mountain-trail and lingered spellbound by the beauties of the highland country and the fascination of its people, the illustrations in Campbell's book are like pictures from home.

Out of this land of leisure and isolation and crude simplicity came thousands of people to the cotton mills in the Piedmont. Centuries old is the purity of their Anglo-Celtic or Anglo-Saxon blood, while "by common interests, hardship and struggles they have blended into a homogeneous people—the type which has come to be called American. The pioneer is still to be recognized in many of his descendants—tall, lean, clear-eyed, self-reliant, never taken by surprise, and of great endurance."<sup>2</sup> His dominant characteristic is independence. His motives are entirely individualistic. "His habit has been to do what he wants, when he wants and only so long as he wants. Time is of no importance; tomorrow will do as well as today. Discipline is exceedingly hard for him to endure, and he is, moreover, a great lover of home, and very apt to be homesick when long out of the mountains."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Campbell, John C., *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

For only four or five months out of the year has the mountaineer been accustomed to work, making his little crop of corn, or lumbering. "During the hardest work they rarely appear hurried or pressed by the necessities of making a living."<sup>4</sup> As with the country people heretofore described, there is always time in the Winter to pick the banjo before the blazing hearth. However, instead of engaging in idle conversation, the mountaineer is given to much discussion of politics and religion.

The isolation and independence of the mountaineers show close correlation with a high rate of illiteracy and an utter lack of social ideals. Yet their illiteracy is by no means ignorance, nor does their independence exclude an almost unbreakable clannishness among kinsmen. Like their low-land brothers, they have almost no knowledge of play as play. While education was smothered in the mountains, the principles of hygiene and sanitation never got a start.

In mountain cabin, as well as on tenant farm, where all life takes on a primitive aspect in the face of practical difficulties, the unshaven and the unshorn and the unbathed are viewed with a tolerance proportionate to one's own struggles toting water from the spring; but habits of hygiene formed on a basis of pain-economy and individual liberty have to undergo radical change when drawn together in a thickly populated center, and where occupation is indoors, a lesson not always easily taught or learned.

Equipped with his individualism and his independence and his attitudes born in adversity and bred in isolation, the mountaineer came to the mills. Usually moving to the mill was not the occasion of the mountaineer's first trip down to the industrial centers, for thither he had been wont to go each Fall to market his wagon-load of cabbages and apples

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, John C., *op. cit.*, p. 70.

and the ready cash with which his produce was bought by the people at the mills had given him the incentive to join them.

Within his covered wagon were wife, children and the household goods. The mule picked its way cautiously down the steep path, and the hound trotted sullenly beneath the wagon. The entire outfit seemed to express the melancholy of breaking home ties. The journey of seventy-five to one hundred miles would take several days. At night camp was made beneath the stars, where some cool wayside spring reminded them of home. As the wayfarers dozed beside their camp fires, far up behind them stretched the shadowy blue of the long mountain range into which their forebears had gone in the high hope of refuge from things intolerant and in the glorious determination to conquer the frontier. Grimly the mountains had exacted their retribution. Rigorously they had moulded humanity to their environment.

Out before the covered wagon unfolded the red-clay hills of the Piedmont plateau; along the banks of its rapid streams, mills were whirring and industry was beckoning. It was as if the Piedmont was offering opportunity to those on whose shoulders fortune had laid a heavy hand. With mingled emotions the mountaineer came forth to meet the challenge.

Before migration, the mountaineer seldom had in mind any particular mill as his destination. It was not uncommon for him to drive up to a superintendent's office about night-fall without food or any arrangement for house or work, and casually announce that he and his family had come to the mill. Temporary provision for their comfort was usually made and the transition from mountaineer to textile operative began.

Less self-reliant than this type of family which has been steadily migrating since the early mills to the present were the great droves of help from the mountains brought down by the labor scouts from the mills during the temporary

shortage of labor in the first decade of the twentieth century. The labor scout was usually a satisfied employee, a good talker, of prosperous appearance, and sufficiently of the mountains to justify the confidence of those among whom he was soliciting.

As might be expected, families with less stamina rose quickest to the bait held forth in his glowing recitals. The most impressionable believed in the millennium at hand in the cotton mills. They disposed of all their possessions except those which could be carried by hand, met the labor scout at the railroad station, accepted his free ticket and hurried to town where "money grew on bushes."

Comedy and tragedy touched elbows in instances like those when one hundred and seventy-two such families arrived simultaneously at one mill and fifty others presented themselves tired, cold, hungry, dirty and unheralded at another office late one Saturday afternoon.

Quite naturally these families were almost invariably doomed to discontent and homesickness. Many of them returned to the mountains and most of them drifted away from the mill which had disillusioned them. A few who have come through the drastic experience with advantage tell of it with humor. Happily the manufacturers let the experiment die out before it became a practice.

All in all, the mountaineer is splendid social material. His independence is sometimes his stumbling block, but he never whines. He takes on much of the new without giving up much of the old. He socializes slowly, but the foundation is bed rock.

Not unlike the farmer and the mountaineer in essential characteristics, but farther along in the process of socialization and adaptation to an industrial society was the kind of operative who came to a new mill village from previously established mills.

In this group were partially developed leaders, ambitious individuals who sought a higher position in the new mill, and families who had caught the vision of higher standards of living. These were the people who helped originate and shape the social institutions. They had come to regard the cotton mill as their opportunity for self-development, and consciously they took a place in the development of a young community.

Just so long as the Southern mills provide positions of leadership and responsibility for this constantly enlarging group will the industry remain in the hands of its present man power. Therein lies the value of small plant units, and the opportunity for the New Industrial South to make a real contribution to conditions of American labor.

Among the seventy-two families at Saxon in the first year of its operation were twenty-six from the farms, twenty from the mountains, and twenty-six from the other mills.

Less conspicuous than in almost any other phase of Southern life is the negro at the cotton mill. Yet he is present and the adjustment between an artisan white class and the negro is a peculiarly interesting racial adaptation. In the South the custom of relegating the lowest forms of work to the negro is almost as inflexible as the color distinction itself.

In the experimental age of the textile industry when the South generally regarded all work as menial, and before the classification of jobs within the industry had so well defined the difference between skilled and unskilled labor, there was naturally a prejudice among the whites against going to work at the mill.

Coincident with this misconception of the newly created status of labor by the introduction of skilled occupation an old race antipathy carried across from the turbulent days of the Reconstruction period. The whites who had the least

self-assurance as to their social standing or whose economic position was least secure were naturally those who felt the most bitterness toward the negro. The inferiority complex of the whites submerged by their own race, took itself out on the blacks by an assumed attitude of aggressive superiority. In the mill villages were many such whites trying to establish themselves in the new order.

Also working at the mills were a few colored men as day laborers, who were assigned to such jobs as scrubbing, firing the boilers, or driving the mules, after the abandonment of the three or four experiments to elevate the negro to the ranks of textile operatives in mills planned to operate with negro men and women under white overseers. Reasons given for the failure of projects to make textile operatives of the negroes range from estimates of the economic effect of his temperament and his slow muscular reaction up through social explanations as to the undesirability of racial admixture. But whatever controlling reasons there may have been, a white class took the textile industry as its heritage.

Negro masons put up the walls of the mill; and colored laborers under white supervision built the streets, but when Saxon mills was ready to operate only the negro firemen, coal rollers and two or three scrubbers and a small outside maintenance force were retained. Except in one or two families of the officers of the mill there was no domestic employment of the negro women.

Five houses were built for the negroes and their families on one edge of the mill property not immediately adjacent to the village proper.

Paralleling situations at other mills the rowdy element in the population took for one of their diversions "rocking" the negro children, sent by their mothers to get laundry from the village. In this connection it may be well to say that one

of the favorite pastimes of boys in the mountain and rural sections is throwing stones at both animate and inanimate objects, a practice called "rocking". It was rare sport, well-nigh irresistible, to have a frightened little "nigger" for a moving target. Group action was stimulated by both parties and the matter would have assumed riotous proportions at times had it not been for the intervention of the more liberal whites.

As the mill people became more certain that skilled occupation in the mills was to be for them alone, as they moulded themselves to the shaping process of society and education, and as the blacks proved themselves law-abiding and inoffensive, the feeling of animosity died away; but no affection took root until relationships were established on the basis of the personal equation, so dominant a force in all Southern connections.

In his genuine understanding of both races involved, the president of the mill brought about opportunities for the factions to become acquainted on a more wholesale and happy basis. For example, among the negroes was Mack, who could pick a banjo and sing, and Luther who could dance. These and one or two others were taken on the mill picnics to provide part of the entertainment. They became known in a new conception and the kindly feeling was contagious. Between the whites and the twenty negroes, now working at the mill, with an almost equal number of colored women employed as cooks and nursemaids by the operatives, there are bonds of mutual affection. The wife of the night watchman never packs her husband's midnight lunch without putting in a snack for Will, the black night fireman. Eloise, who has cooked at the Teacherage for nearly ten years, writes regularly how "my ladies is gettin' along" when the head of their house is away on leave of absence.

Uncle Jerry, bent and shrunken and gray, basks in the



peaceful eventide of eighty-eight years of happy devotion to the white folks and a simple faith in the glories of the life beyond. The imagery of his words accompanied by a beautiful grace of gesture indicates the wealth of elemental art possessed by his race. Almost carried into mesmerism by the depth of his feeling, he speaks of religion—"I loves all de 'nominations; rain and hail, sleet and snow, dey all flows into the one great ribber at las."

Less gentle, but equally picturesque is the dominant character, Old Uncle John. For twenty-five years he has swept the office and dictated respectfully to its occupants, while he keeps "dem triflin' young niggers" at the waste house scared into unhesitating obedience. He shuffles along with the full responsibility of the mill on his ragged shoulders, but he owns his neat little home near town and is one of the two Republicans at the mill.

Among the young negroes is Ben, who trims the hedges and is replenishing the earth with a dozen or so prospective pullman porters, and Dick, always grinning and singing and glad to be home after serving with the "ditch brigade" in France. His name, with those of four other negroes, is on the village Honor Roll.

Christmas morning brings quaint survival of an old plantation custom. In holiday attire "the boys"—for such is the collective name of the negroes at the mill—go up to "Cap'n's" house. When he appears at the door, "Christmas gift, Cap'n," is called out with laugh and joke. When they have been remembered appropriately with coins and cigars, they depart to make a similar call on "The Super," and a few other chosen friends. This is celebration, not charity.

Once in a while the mill serves its colored labor with a 'possum and tater supper, when some task of unusual importance is completed. Each August the attention of the

negroes and many whites is centered on the big camp meeting, held near the village by a country colored church. The singing is spirituals, all description of which is inadequate. The preaching is by their own race and is worthy of notice, as it usually centers around regret for the impudence and the laziness and moral laxity of the young. Old-time ways are sighed for and a plea is made for more observance of law and self-discipline. There is much oratorical quotation of scripture and graphic adaptation of it. A few seats in the church are graciously reserved for the white folks who attend from the mill, but most of them remain outside in respectful attention and appreciation.

Those who have never had the good fortune to hear an unsophisticated colored church worship, or "the boys" sing at their work, or laugh in their fun, have yet to hear the most spontaneous outburst of a happy heart, glad in the simple joy of living.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

A MILL village can be rightly understood only when it is grasped in the entirety of community; units within units, or circles within circles.

As within the works of a watch, each wheel must be of relative size and weight for the burden it is to carry; so here must be mainspring, lubrication, balance wheel and hair-spring:—occupation, recreation, education and spiritual expression.

Necessity forced the mill village into existence and the people who turned toward it for occupation required social opportunity from it. Thus the product of the mill village is social as well as commercial, and the successful manufacturer must know societal engineering as well as textiles.

People the world over "are nearly as ambitious for communal as for financial rewards. You cannot bring five hundred people together in a factory or anywhere else habitually without providing a field for social striving. They crave organization, fun, activity and influence upon one another."<sup>1</sup>

In just this way the mill village falls in line with communal groupings the world over. In fact, in it are situations and relationships and processes akin in their cardinal properties to life on the college campus. Leadership and discipline and fraternalism are alike in both environments and in each place

<sup>1</sup>Fisher, Boyd, "U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics," *Bulletin No. 227*, Oct., 1917, p. 34.

use of opportunity is largely a matter of individual capacity and adaptation.

Work and play, occupation and leisure are so contiguous in the mill village that it is impossible to analyze this occupational condition, or that extra-mural situation without considering all the influences in each affecting the other. It is impossible to say that here terminates the effect of one, here commences interest in the other.

In the composite whole converge human needs and desires, expressed in social institutions and agencies. The kind of contact made with these by the individual indicates his social value, reflects his attitude toward self and others, shows his capacity and his relation to the group.

#### HOME LIFE

In spite of the wonderful progress and social advance that have developed with industrial prosperity, the mill people of today are not too far removed from their original background to have shaken off its influence.

The mill village supplants isolation with social organization. It is the link between poverty and prosperity; it is the meeting place of old and new. Granny wears a sun-bonnet and came to the mill in a farm wagon, the young'uns wear georgette and silk hose and own a Ford car, Grandpaw chaws terbacker and fiddles, Grandson smokes cigarettes and takes home jazz records for the Victrola. Snuff is on the taboo, but Coca Cola is popular. The elder generation talks in quaint dialect, in which Old English forms like holped (helped) and shuck (shook) preserve the strong Chaucerian preterite, and fit (fought) and writ (wrote) the past tense. Afeared and heard are perfectly good ancient participles in use, while archaic plural endings attached to nouns make beasties and deskies out of beasts and desks.

Equally picturesque are words, nearly obsolete, used in

their original meaning; ill, bereft, least and peart. Hit, older than English itself, being the Anglo-Saxon neuter of he, is too often regarded as an illiterate expression rather than the rich dialect which it is.

Pseudo-intellectuals do our rare etymological heritage a grave injustice in such instances as the one in which a night-school inspector took the teacher and her class of mill boys and girls to task because there had been no corrective criticism of a student's statement that he had "nary book." (ne'er a)

However, those upon whose ear Granny's dialect falls as discord no doubt find encouragement in her Grandchildren's study of French and Spanish in the city schools.

Likewise rich are the folkways and mores in the life of the mill people. What do we guard more jealously, or cherish more blindly the world over than such precepts learned at the hearthstone? Yet lack of sympathetic appreciation of them is too apparent in many uplift programs designed for the mill people. Sometimes it is even forgotten that a man's house is his castle to such an extent that one social worker jeopardized her position by declining to accept the suggestion of her superior officer in Federal Extension work that she go into the homes of the mill people and teach them to hang their family photographs at a "less heathenish angle."

Speaking in generalities about the standards of home life at Saxon is dangerous and difficult. A family content today with a minimum number of rooms, bare floors, a few straight chairs and beds in every room, may blossom out within the next few months in a larger house, with rugs on the floor, comfortable furniture and bedrooms differentiated from the living rooms. Conversely, sickness, or the withdrawal of some wage-earning member of the family for one of many reasons may result in a retrogression of comfort and standards in a family now appearing substantial.

Some housewives observe such niceties as tablecloths and silver ware and even keep a colored girl as cook or nursemaid. Some houses are clean and tidy and attractively furnished; in others there is an utter lack of cleanliness. It seems as if individual discrimination in the expenditure of wages, rather than the amount of them, accounts for the great variation in home conditions.

In 1919, among 134 families, exclusive of the management, 58 had pianos and Victrolas, 16 had automobiles, 11 were sending their children to higher institutions of learning.

In 1926, among 178 families, 23 had pianos, 79 had Victrolas, 5 had radios and 39 had automobiles, and 18 were sending their children to higher institutions of learning.

As might be expected from the rapid economic change that is being undergone, there is much waste and extravagance among the mill people; however, there is also much commendable thrift.

Beginning when all relationships were intensely man to man, and wants were few, prudent employees would request the paymaster to keep in the office for them the part of their wages not needed to pay for "rations." Even now, many who would hesitate to establish a connection with a city bank make regular deposits in the office, which, to encourage thrift, pays interest on funds undisturbed for six months. Ninety-four such accounts at present show a total of \$17,912.60, with the median at \$201.00.

There are also twelve holders of Building and Loan stock, carried by the operatives through the mill office in co-operation with a local bank. Payments range from \$5.00 per month to \$33.00.

The Christmas Savings Club seems to meet a popular response, possibly because of the nearness of the goal, possibly because of the elaborate Southern celebration of Christmas. The figures in Table I give the facts:

TABLE I. CHRISTMAS CLUB DEPOSITS BY EMPLOYEES OF SAXON MILLS

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. members</i>	<i>Deposits</i>
1921 .....	38	\$2,880.18
1922 .....	52	3,850.34
1923 .....	86	5,500.54
1924 .....	80	5,131.95
1925 .....	65	4,529.14
1926 .....	72	5,001.10

Much of the saving of the mill people is in life insurance. In 1920 the National Industrial Conference Board estimated that sixty to ninety per cent of the people carried burial or life insurance.<sup>1</sup> The policies are often small, \$100.00 being the figure at which many of the people start taking insurance. At Saxon Mills in 1926 one hundred and twenty-two families carried policies, ranging from \$150.00 to \$1,000.00. Sometimes every member of the family is insured.

Here, as at most of the mills, the Woodmen of the World is a strong fraternal order. Its 188 members carry \$190,000 insurance, the cost per member being \$18.00 per \$1,000 a year.

Adjacent to the property owned by the Saxon Mills are three small communities of about twenty houses each, built by their owners, who are operatives in the mill. These homes are more or less comfortable little frame bungalows, without the modern conveniences of the company-owned houses. They represent the constructive influence of the Building and Loan Association and the deep-rooted love of the people for a little piece of land of their own. A population with such marked proclivity to the soil is safely conservative in its policies.

A man's hobby is the amelioration of life's cares, and at Saxon Mills interesting and varied hobbies, exclusive of participation in the social or athletic activities, lead the

<sup>1</sup> "National Industrial Conference Board," *Special Bulletin No. 8*.

operatives home from work with the joyful footsteps of anticipation. There are Jess' white leghorns which went to the poultry show in Madison Square Garden in New York in 1925, after taking several prizes at County and State Fairs; there is Bill's library of 1,024 books, in the back of each of which he has written a review; there is Charlie's Victrola with a variety of attachments devised by his inventive ingenuity; there is the young mechanic who carves in plaster of paris, a weaver who makes doll's furniture, and a girl who tints snapshots. There is Shoof's thoroughbred bird dog with her puppies. There are two exquisite collections of rose bushes, and one assortment of fishing tackle that would thrill the heart of Isaac Walton. As climax there is "Big Six," living in one of the most humble homes in the village, but who has pieced 114 quilts within the last three years for the Red Cross because she doesn't know "how else to help the poor"!

Reading consumes a good share of the leisure. Ten years ago people simply sat idle on the porch and talked, or gathered around the evening hearth, tilted back on two legs of the chair, rehearsing whatever of local interest had happened during the day, and freely punctuating the conversation with long shots of tobacco juice, aimed at the fire with amazing precision. Now and then an organ would wail forth a hymn tune, or the folk songs of a banjo picker would enliven the night air.

To the latter diversions, pianos, piano players and Victrolas are furnishing overwhelming competition, while the spoken word is declining in favor of the printed page. 155 families of the 168 at Saxon Mills take a daily paper. During the World War, when interest in current events and the casualty list was acute, 124 families of the 134 in residence then regularly subscribed to a paper. A canvass of the school children in 1926 showed that 239 of the 272 families



which they represent have the Bible in their homes. There are some books, a very few of which are owned. The local library and the city library are well patronized, light fiction being demanded from the first, while the city library shows that the mill readers from all the industrial satellite communities are twenty per cent of its total readers.<sup>1</sup>

The city librarian states that the demands of the mill people are by no means for fiction only. One man from Arkwright devours French History and one from another mill wants Botany. The book stores in the City of Spartanburg, serving the entire county, two colleges and 37 mill communities, state that their greatest sales are the confession and adventure magazines. This tallies with the statement from one of the largest magazine agencies in the country that while it is selling 25 copies of such magazines as "Harpers" over the counter it has a call for 750 confession and sensational periodicals from under the counter where they are concealed.<sup>2</sup>

The Spartanburg bookstores state that they do not know who buys the magazines. However, there are, to my personal knowledge, forty-five buyers of them at Saxon, and it is safe to assume that several persons read each magazine bought. A recent domestic tragedy, centering around desertion by the wife and the consequent suicide of the husband was explained by some in the village as the direct influence upon the wife of the confession magazines which she habitually read.

In the local situation, the presence of Bill, an eighteen-year-old spinner, with his personal library of 1,024 books, popularizes the novel. His collection of best sellers is up to the minute. Not many weeks ago, as I was passing through

<sup>1</sup> Data furnished by Miss Mary Baum, Librarian, Kennedy Library, Spartanburg, S. C.

<sup>2</sup> Franklin Square Agency, Chicago, Ill.

the mill, a lively discussion group summoned me. They had been reading Percy Marks' "The Plastic Age," and the "Prom" was the cause of some little disagreement among them. None of them was quite sure just what a "prom" was, and one woman had advanced the ingenious idea that it must be something to "Promote the College." (It probably does.) Information about what a "Prom" is was easily given and readily accepted, but any conviction that a description *in print* could be inaccurate or exaggerated was hopeless. Such is the universal misinformation as to how the other half lives, and such is the despotic power of the printed word!

Along this line one wonders just how much genuine enlightenment has come with the decline of illiteracy when the leader of a religious sect in the village commands his followers not to work on the night shift, because in the Bible it is written that Christ said "the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). I am daily expecting the accent shifted to the word *man* as explanation of the willingness with which some able-bodied men allow the women and children to keep up the family.

One wonders even more about the reading situation since one day at camp when the superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School, a young weaver whose schooling could not have exceeded ten months, casually entered into debate with the Doctor's son, just graduated with honors from College, over the merits of H. G. Wells' "Outline of History." Each was in dead earnest. The weaver carried on a double-barreled argument in which accurate Scripture and cardinal points in Wells were placed side by side. The college boy skipped disjointedly around from one high spot of science to another. For our purposes, the use of his knowledge by each is more significant than the issues at stake. In their reading the mill people are groping. What leadership, if any, is justifiable? Whence should it come?

From the first the policy of the Saxon Mills has been to meet individual needs in the light of the particular situation. Thus the houses were wired for electric lights as this or that family overcame its fear of electricity and the lightning supposed to be attracted by the wires. By 1918 the demand for electric lights had become so general that all the houses were equipped with electric lights. Now many families use electric devices such as flat-irons or perculators and curling tongs. Meters on each house control the bill paid by the people for electricity consumed.

The same policy governs the installation of bath tubs, space for which was reserved in each house when the toilets were placed. There is no reason to believe that every family would use a bath tub for bathing purposes if it were provided. In an attempt to standardize conditions on a plane up to which some families do not yet measure, a neighboring mill management put tubs in all its village houses. With mingled emotions the president of the mill soon heard that one tub had been used to scald a hog at butchering time, and that others were being used for various storage purposes, wood, coal and potatoes.

It is common sense to recognize family variations and to provide houses to fit their standards. Among the two hundred and eight houses at Saxon<sup>1</sup> there are ninety-nine with set tubs, but the families which prefer low rent to bath tubs use tin tubs, (if any). Running water is in every house, and use of it is not metered.

One of the most noticeable adaptations to the present-day order is in the changed way of laundering. In the mountains it is picturesque to see two or three women gathered around the spring to do their washing in a leisurely, sociable way. Water is heated in a big black pot hung like a witch's cauldron over a fire in the open, but at the mill the onerous task of such

<sup>1</sup> Figures compiled in 1927.

washing is not even clothed in picturesqueness. Formerly clothes hung promiscuously around were eye-sores in every back yard, but for the past few years the city laundries have found the preponderance of their "wet-wash" business in the mill villages. Three rival laundries serve the local community.

This relief to the housewife does not seem to result in more leisure, but in a different employment of her time and in the freer use of fresh clothing by the family.

Mothers make most of the clothing of the small children. Work dresses are made by village seamstresses, but dress-up clothes are bought ready-made, and the neat appearance of the young people makes them indistinguishable in the crowds on a city street, a fact which was not always so.

One of the greatest detriments to high standards of home life is found in the floating population. Their presence causes both economic and social waste. The floaters move around from one village to another, never staying in one place long enough to become assimilated. Citizenship means nothing to them, and their shiftlessness is responsible for the lowest standards at the mill. Sometimes one wonders if it has not been this element that has posed for sensational pictures illustrating articles on the deplorable conditions at the mills. These people are always undernourished and unkempt, if not downright filthy. They travel light, since their household goods are reduced to a minimum. But few mills tolerate their presence long, for intellect recognizes that they are a poor economic and social investment, even while sympathy considers heartless the denial to them of another chance. However, if some constructive social agency, led by altruistic motives, tries to take them in hand for development, they slip out from under the discipline, and without educational, social or religious ties go their nomadic way, gypsies, shorn of romance. It is difficult to count these

families in a population. Their number is evidently decreasing and perhaps the estimate of two in a hundred is not far afield.

Different from these shiftless wanderers are the people who cannot resist a periodic call to the land. Every Spring there is some exodus to the farm, and every Fall some return from the country, where there have been long weeks of mid-summer idleness, while cotton was making. The disadvantages of this inter-migration seem to outweigh the advantages. In the fields there is no child-labor regulation, families go to the farm several weeks before the school session at the mill has ended, and return long after school has started in the Fall, thus depriving the child of a chance to make his grade. Health measures on tenant farms seldom, if ever, measure up to those in a mill village.

The length of residence of the families at Saxon Mills, in August, 1926 is shown in Table II:

TABLE II. LENGTH OF RESIDENCE OF FAMILIES AT SAXON MILLS,  
AUGUST, 1926

<i>Years Residence</i>	<i>Number Families</i>
25 or over .....	11
20—24 .....	20
15—19 .....	21
10—14 .....	35
5—9 .....	30
2—4 .....	20
1 or less .....	31
Total .....	168

Figures obtained from records of Saxon Mills Community Dept.

Family ties are strong throughout the entire South. This is intensified in the close-knit family life that is the outstanding characteristic of the home in the cotton-mill village. The people think in terms of family, an attitude that is both cause and result, or, to put it exactly, result and cause and

result, occasioned first by the effect of the primitive and homogeneous rural life in which the family was the unit of existence, its migration as such to the mill, where it offered itself *in toto* as the unit of employment and where, in turn, it came to be regarded as the basic human factor in the industry.

Woven like woof in the fabric of the community life is the relationship between families, indicated by more than a hundred marriages between boys and girls reared in the village during the twenty-five years of its history. In addition to this inter-marriage, there are at least eighty families, among the 168, related to each other by various bonds of kinship.

To meet the needs of the young married couples desiring to establish their homes on higher standards of comfort than those of the preceding generation, Saxon is trying a housing experiment. A dozen "bungalettes" have been built on an attractive street, popularly known as "Honeymoon Lane."

These houses consist of a small porch, living room, bed room, bath and kitchen with a breakfast nook. They are models of comfort and compactness, being built on the plan which won first prize in a recent National Architects' contest. Whereas the old houses rent for 25 cents a room a week, a rate prevailing at other mills for similar houses, and the modern large bungalows for \$2.75 a week, the bungalettes are \$1.25 a week. Demand for them prophesies the erection of more in the near future. It has been necessary to constantly and firmly deny use of them to large families, who do not yet grasp the undesirability of overcrowding.

Early marriage is on the wane. In spite of the former laxities of the marital laws in South Carolina there are but two deserted wives in the village. There is also one unmarried mother. Probably a divorce law in South Carolina would very little affect the domestic situation at the mills.

North Carolina and Georgia are easily accessible to those seeking divorce, and taking up residence there at the mills, similar to those in South Carolina is easy, but seldom resorted to for this purpose by the mill people. Couples who regard the marriage relationship lightly adjust the matter among themselves with a forgiveness that can be explained only by an elemental feeling of triumph in having won the fickle one back from an enemy, or in relief in the release from a threadbare situation in which separation is stigmatized no more here than divorce is elsewhere.

Separation does not materially alter the economic position of the wife, unless, indeed, her return to an industrial occupation improves her situation. Where there are children affected, some kinswoman usually attaches herself to the broken household.

After all, the social approval or disapproval of domestic situations is largely regulated by custom, and the mores can make anything right.

#### SIGNIFICANT FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS

Moving around in this complexity of the Old and the New, the arrested development and the dynamic awakening, is a pure American stock both shaping and being shaped by an industrial socialization.

In this social melting-pot, human precipitation takes place according to the elemental properties of the individual, just as in the chemist's crucible solution or solidification is controlled by the character of the components, the potentialities of which, in turn, have been determined by forces at play since the world began.

Socialization at the mill is an acute test for the survival of the fittest, not merely those fittest for industrial occupation, but those fittest for adjustment anywhere along the great range of a modern society, established locally on the prosperity of the rising textile industry.

The following sketches are of significant families and individuals whose experiences drive home to us just what is taking place in this momentous social change brought about by the cotton mills. These sketches represent this or that factor at play in the recurrent cycle of creating society from man and man from society. These stories are merely flashes on the screen, they carry neither argument nor plot, and they break abruptly because the lives of which they tell have not yet run their course.

Purposely the "typical" family has been omitted: partly, because I have tried to know the families of the mill in the pronounced colors of their individuality rather than in that intermediate grey of twilight which we get by levelling the dark hours of midnight and the bright sunshine of noonday into an average; partly, because I wish to break down that mass conception of the mill people, based largely on inaccurate observation and that literature which is easier reading than the scientific surveys of the situation.

Particularly is this chapter recommended to my friends who have looked at me through their mental lorgnettes and murmured, "Oh yes, the mill people."

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

Some twenty years ago as sunrise lighted up the small, crude house on a one-man farm, the father of several little tots called them out of bed to help him gather pine knots from the woods on the nearby red-clay hills. When the children had filled the wagon they were to be rewarded by a trip to town to help the father peddle this kindling from door to door.

Within the past few years I was taking tea at the home of an artist friend in Spartanburg when the painting of a little child, holding out her chubby hands to the glow of the fire held my attention by the appeal of the picture. In reply to my question the artist told me that some years ago the little



child with several brothers and sisters and the father had been in the habit of coming to her house to sell pine fagots. In sympathy for the children one cold day she had invited them in to the warmth of her fireplace, and the painting had resulted. After the father told her that he was going to move to one of the cotton mills where he could put the children to work, she had lost track of them, but the name she could recall. It sounded familiar.

The next night at the meeting of the Girls' Cooking Class I asked one of the girls if she had ever heard of my hostess of the preceding evening. Her face lighted up and she told of going to the beautiful house to have her picture painted, and of playing with the dolls belonging to the little girl there.

To make a long story short—In the twenty years that have elapsed since five little tots gathered pine knots and took breathless peeps into the homes of the rich, an almost destitute rural family has undergone many changes by taking a place in the industrial regime.

In the mill school one girl finished three grades and the other five, after which they went to work in the mill and married young textile employees. They have established good comfortable homes and have fast increasing families.

The oldest boy, exhibiting sterling qualities of character at the community center, won such confidence that during the World War when a large local bank was stripped of its clerks he was placed in a minor position there, from which, with seven grades of schooling, he has risen to the position of book-keeper.

The next boy, likable and easy-going, has needed a steady influence to keep him on the track of regular employment, but since marrying a high-school graduate, the daughter of the mill mechanic, he has settled down on "Honeymoon Lane," and in this morning's mail is the announcement of the arrival of a son, named for the father and for the president

of Saxon Mills. After his day's work in the card room this young chap is the swimming instructor at the community pool, a position of no little responsibility. As a child he quit school far too soon and his father, believing in individual rights, would not permit compulsory attendance.

The youngest boy, caught by the spirit of adventure in Florida, is a carpenter there.

This is not a family that would accept patronage or paternalism, but in all probability might not the innate character and ability which it possesses have gone to waste without industrial opportunity and a directing leadership found in the mill village?

\* \* \* \* \*

Not so bright is the story of this family which carefully avoided yielding itself to the discipline of organized society, while the other adapted itself to it. Each exemplifies what the influence of the cotton mill, so frequently thought of as a terrible monster crushing child life, can or cannot mean in the lives of children.

Coming from out a dim obscurity and craftily settling down between the city limits of Spartanburg and the jurisdiction of the mill village of Saxon was a family of father, mother, son and three little girls. Somewhere on his nomadic sojourns the father had picked up a second-hand photographic outfit by which he thought he could support his family by serving as photographer to the mill people. He took up residence in a discarded, ramshackle tenant house, and for a long time displayed no signs of misconduct other than slothfulness. The children came to the village school spasmodically, where one showed marked musical ability, and all were noticeable for their likable personalities. The mother sought a day's work every now and then in the mill until she died and was buried by charity.

Instead of going to work himself at regular employment,

or letting the sixteen-year-old boy and the fifteen-year-old girl become child laborers, the father roamed around looking for photographic victims while the children went dirty, scantily clad and hungry. As they were beyond the village pale and were not employees of the mill it was almost impossible to get a hold on the situation, and at that time social work in the county was not sufficiently organized to take the case.

Then Camp Wadsworth sprang up over night and the father made acquaintances there. Within three months he had made prostitutes of his fifteen- and thirteen-year-old daughters and soldiers were going to the house in such numbers that the matter was reported to the camp authorities. The two girls were taken to the detention house of the Girls' Protective League, and overnight the father with the little girl slunk off; where to no one took the authority or had the interest to ascertain.

\* \* \* \* \*

On many counts these stories of two overseers are good to know. When the great American epic is written may it sing of the courage, the conquest, the glorious achievement of men in shirt sleeves; of men whose vision led them through the grind, confident and unafraid. In the ranks of the common American people their number is thousands; in the textile industry of the South they are one in seventy.<sup>1</sup>

A man in the early forties, with the physique of a gridiron hero, and brown eyes, clear and kind, in a face strong with reserve and dignity, tells of his life simply:

"Was you ever up in the mountains way over in beyond Waynesville? Well, Paw and Maw was raised there. Her father was a preacher, and four of my uncles. Paw's father owned a right smart of land but he had so many children

<sup>1</sup> A rough estimate of the proportionate number of overseers. It does not include office forces nor men in the stores.

there was only a little bitte piece for each of them. There was a raft of us kids, too, and when Paw heared how good everybody was gettin' on at the cotton mills he allowed we'd better come down and get some of that money that growed on bushes."

And then the usual unfolding of the tale, this one varying only in minor points from that which is told at a thousand mill-cottage fire-sides; selling the mountain farm and disposing of everything that could not be carried in the wagon, a visit to all the kinfolks before setting forth, the long, slow journey down in the covered wagon; in this instance two of the children developing typhoid fever during the trip, arriving at the mill unknown and unannounced, getting promises of jobs for the whole family, moving into a house for which they had brought only scant furnishings, long tragic weeks while typhoid raged through the family, and then measles and mumps, all of which they survived, although the expenses incurred drained the family treasury and even set up a round debt at the mill store, the proprietor of which had befriended them.

Then good times set in. The father and eight children went to work, but "I was ten years old before I ever got 'sides' of my own," says the present overseer, "until then they had made me help my sister. One day she couldn't go in and I was afeared to tell the boss man so I did the work myself. The next morning he give me two "sides" of my own and I was the proudest kid ever you seen. We was all just plumb crazy to get that debt paid off at the store. I don't say it to boast, but we had never been used to debt like some."

On Sunday afternoons this little chap, outwardly priding himself on his meanness, like the rest of the doffers, would walk up to Saxon to play in the foundations of the mill which was then building.

"Right there I made up my mind that some day I would help run this mill. I used to think of it like it was mine, and the dearest wish of my heart was that under me I'd have some of the boss men which had treated me so rough. Well, sir, you know that very thing has come about, but I can't treat those old fellows like I thought I would."

We need no more of the story here. Thirty years ago in a covered wagon coming out of the mountains was a little kid of nine, in homespun. At ten he was a spinner at eight cents a day, at seventeen he went to night school at ten cents a night; then section man, second hand, and at forty, overseer; and along the way a happy marriage to a girl near whom he had worked in the spinning room; two sons and an adopted daughter; a constantly improving standard of living, a victrola, piano, two automobiles, membership in several fraternal orders, trustee of the village school, deacon in the Baptist church, cornet player in the village band, building and loan shares and insurance policies.

Only the disappointment that the oldest son would not go through high school and on to college. The cruelty of fate in being refused the privilege of giving to your own in abundance what you yourself would have seized so eagerly in meagreness!

\* \* \* \* \*

Since this story was told to me, my respect for the elevator has increased, particularly for the slow and clumsy freight elevator in the mill. Once at least it was the wagon to a star.

From a very superior plane of knowledge a mill boy tried to tell his country cousin about the elevator in the wonderful mill where he worked, and where the boss men got two dollars and a half a day. This was nearly forty years ago.

The country cousin was twelve years old and for two years he had been dependent on his own support. His grandfather had owned slaves and eighteen hundred acres of land

in the middle of the State, and his would have been a goodly inheritance had it not been for a distribution of this property by which the children of his father's first marriage claimed everything, leaving him and three sisters and his mother penniless. The little girls were put into a Presbyterian orphanage, the mother took in sewing and the boy of ten was bound out to a farmer. At twelve he was raising a one-mule cotton crop with the promise of twenty-five dollars at the end of the year.

But he was no ploughshare, rather steel for a Damascus sword. His imagination ran to the wonders of the elevator, and the ways in which such a device could work. He dreamed of going to see it, and in other fancies he saw fine clothes and luxuries for his mother and himself. His musician's temperament convinced him that the woods were strangely peopled, and so real to him were these satyrs and the negro "hants" that he could not bring himself to pass the woods at night. As a consequence a row with the farmer and the bitter realization that the poverty of a plough boy had no defense against the wrath of the rich.

In the corner of a Virginia rail fence the boy cried out his anguish and his indignation. In the following calm arose a prayer from the depths of his soul to God that He would help him to get away from the farm and go to the mill, let him know things and have things like other people, even let him be a boss man. Oh, the promises of faith if that were granted, promises that have been kept without any affectation of piety, without ever mention of them except in the one instance when he was pressed to tell his story.

At fourteen he got his first suit of store clothes and with his mother set out to conquer the wonders of the mill. At fifteen he heard a piano for the first time and decided to learn to play it. At twenty he moved to another mill and became second hand. At twenty-three he was made overseer

in the Saxon Mills. At forty he organized the mill band and was subscribing to the "Etude." At forty-five his band was furnishing the official music at State and County fairs. That music, a genuine gift of the gods in cases like this, need not preclude practical business ability is indicated by the farm, the two city houses, the handsome car which this man owns, besides other resources which he has accumulated.

His daughter is now teaching, one son is a bank clerk, the other works in the mill with his father, and the youngest is a musician in the United States Navy.

\* \* \* \* \*

If these incomplete sketches of human adjustment to a social change were finished productions this would carry the title, "Why Social Workers Grow Grey," although perhaps "Jukes—Beware Where You Visit" would be more appropriate. In the plan under hand we will merely let it speak for itself of the scientific absorption which many ne'er-dowells have experienced in the institutions of public welfare made possible by economic prosperity.

Doc was a moron. His tidy little old mother saw to it that he got off to the mill on time every morning. He was a good weaver and made comfortable wages. Doc never married and he and his mother lived simply and well. After she died he went mechanically along to the mill from the house, to the house from the mill.

When the epidemic of influenza was at its height Doc called for help from the Community Department of the mill. His sister and her husband and five children had come from the country to visit him and all of them had gone to bed stricken with the flu.

In one bed I found an idiotic woman, sharing her scant blankets with a half paralyzed husband and a sick baby. In the other bed were four children, two of them delirious.

Aunt Hat, the practical nursing woman of the village was

hired to take the situation in hand, but she refused to stay in such filthy surroundings as the neat little home of Doc's mother had become. Every nurse and relief agency in the county was overloaded with cases of the epidemic. As in many other instances, the situation was up to the mill.

The baby was extricated and sterilized and taken to the Teacherage to be temporarily adopted. There he rebelled against a well balanced diet from a bottle until he was pronounced subnormal by a baby specialist and taken to a neighbor's to be boarded. Fortunately he died at an early age.

On the grounds of personal sympathy a private hospital agreed to take the father, only to discover that he was developing meningitis, of which he died. He was buried at the expense of the city, and it fell to me to break the news of his death to his wife. Instead of the outburst of grief, which had been expected, she asked with less feeling than curiosity, "I reckon he lay a pretty corpse? Did they put in them sets he got from the tooth dentist? He shore was proud of them teeth, pore thing."

After a fashion the rest of the family got well, bolstered up with gallons of soup, made by the good women of the village, and cheered along with the lemon pies surreptitiously smuggled in by Doc at the command of the patients.

As soon as his guests were on their feet, Doc took sick and died. Then efforts to clean up were started in earnest. The State Psychologist was summoned. She confirmed the suspicions about the mother's mentality and found the children normal, possibly the result of the difference in the pater-nity of all of them. Before the mother could be removed to the State institution for the feeble-minded it was necessary to get the children into orphanages, a task of no little moment with one parent living; the kind of parent, by the way, who after the death of her husband made provision for the care of the children by sending to the county poorhouse



for her old Uncle Tom, one of the paupers, to come and live with them, her given reasons being that "he could cut the stove wood and wouldn't eat no more than a cat."

Uncle Tom was escorted back to the place where he belonged and all arrangements were completed to embark three divisions of the family on their institutional careers. Two of the parties reached the orphanages without mishap. The following morning I was to take the mother to the State Training School for the Feeble Minded. Overnight I left her in charge of one of her neighbors. Plans seemed to be working out well, but as I was preparing for the journey early the next morning the neighbor burst into my room with the startling news that her charge had eloped.

As I dashed up to enlist the aid of the President of the mill, I met two men of the village on their way to tell me which road the eloping couple had taken. The whole incident seems funny to me now, but I wasn't laughing at 6:00 A. M. that bleak January morning as the President and I sped over a frozen country road at something like forty miles per hour.

When we overtook the couple and drove our car across the road in front of them the conversation ran something like this: Said I, "Why, Bessie, you said you would go to Clinton with me this morning." Said Tom to her about like a shyster lawyer, "You don't have to go less you want to." Said the President: "Tom Thorne, you keep your mouth out of this, or I'll take care of you." (In the South, you see, issues are still sometimes settled on a man to man basis, in preference to abstract principles.)

When Bessie got out of the buggy we awoke to the realization that in commandeering the first car at hand we had happened to use a bright red, sporty roadster, decidedly built for two, but we took her in and I sat on her lap as we rode back through town under the wondering gaze of the

populace. One feels a little conspicuous in just those circumstances, and not altogether comfortable, for there were intermittent hysterics from the would-be bride behind my back, and during the lulls I fully expected to be strangled.

The family had no more than settled down to their first well-ordered lives in institutions, and the village had ceased to talk about them, when a man of thirty years appeared at the Baptist parsonage. He said that he worked at a neighboring mill, that he had been the father of the oldest child, (a well developed girl just then thirteen) that he was most penitent and wished to atone for his past sins by now undertaking the responsibilities of his parenthood. Without further formality, and probably with much commendation for his noble purpose, he secured the letter from the preacher, vouching for the parenthood and requesting the denominational orphanage to let the man have the young girl.

Two days later the Captain of the Salvation Army, the Red Cross Secretary and I were summoned to the Master's Court on the charge of having kidnapped the child from the home of her professed father. This man had put his wife to work in the mill at night, leaving himself and the child alone in the house. At the close of the trial the girl was returned to the orphanage, where at the moment of this writing she is supposed to be. Her sister at another orphanage has just completed a secretarial course in a Business College.

The computation of the social and economic expense which has been saved the State by the institutional care of this family can well be a very concrete argument for the close organization of society, the support of scientific welfare, and the much-needed cooperation between the public and the private agencies on whom falls the trust with such responsibility.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Tige, big, impulsive Tige of the many lapses. Everybody

likes him, too well, or did until his last irregular slump. However, even now there are two yet willing to take him back into the community if he cares to confess his waywardness and come; though it may seem strange, his wife, and judging from past experience, the superintendent of the mill.

Tige's intimates say he was raised "rough," and therein lies their pardon for his errors. Of powerful physique, convivial disposition, skillful with all machinery, auto-truck or loom, Tige has made himself a dominant figure on the landscape. For long weeks he works hard and commands high wages, though he never seems to save. After such industry he indulges in a bacchanalian debauch—"escape from reality," it is termed in psychology, a "grand bat," it is called in the village—during which he has carried on a veritable reign of terror in the community barber-shop or in the city vaudeville into which he burst on one occasion with a policeman's badge and pistol and tried to arrest the audience.

To pay for such fun his wife goes to work in the weaveshop, confiding that she always keeps a secret fund "to pay his way out," nor can one doubt that any motive other than real devotion prompts her action. There are no little Tiges to share her affections. Once she sacrificed her piano, pride and joy of her heart, for him. Tige's boss also overlooks his weakness and hastens down to court to bail him out.

After such an outburst Tige has been willing slave to both, and in that contrite mood his gracious personality attracts the friendship and the liking of even the austere. In such a calm he took his wife up to the vacation camp, driving up in a new Ford, with all the dash and spirit of a Lochinvar. To the ladies he presented a bushel of peaches, to the whole crowd he was a jolly and welcome addition. But just one year later two good homes in the village were shattered. Tige took another man's wife away with him. When the de-

serted husband went to Tige and made complaint against him. Tige met him at the door. Confident in his physical and psychological ascendancy he spoke very calmly and deliberately, "You'd better go home," he said. "I don't want to have to kill you." And the husband knew that his defeat was absolute. His grief and chagrin were more than he could bear and in a few weeks he committed suicide. Tige's wife has suffered agony, yet she hopefully awaits his return.

\* \* \* \* \*

There have been but few college men among the vast number of minor executives found in the offices of the Piedmont cotton mills. College was a luxury which many in the South could not afford for decades after the Civil War, and in those days, when mills were building, administration fell to those who had the native ability to discharge it. A high standard of work and morale resulted to challenge the oncoming ranks of the better schooled executives.

Some thirty years ago, just when his seventeen-year-old son was ready for college, a Methodist minister in South Carolina, whose father's family was of the best New England stock, was stricken with paralysis. The son decided to go to the cotton mill to earn his way through college. At sixteen dollars a month with board at ten it was, of course, impossible to realize that ambition.

From the mill he was transferred to the store, and from there to the office through the routine of which he was continually promoted until by a change of mills some eight years ago he arrived in an executive position of high respect and responsibility. His children have been educated well, and his home is more than comfortable.

That is the normal record of the average office man at the mill. With his position goes influence, but in this case, personality has gained him more than that. He is well read, likes and knows good music, writes clever skits, and by his

ready wit and fineness has endeared himself to every kind of person in the village. He is a leader in the church, a trustee in the school, and every committee in the village seeks his counsel.

Has talent like his been hid under a bushel? Who knows how big the sphere he may have filled, but it is much to have conquered one's environment bare-handed, and to stand as a beacon light among a people looking up for leadership.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is a story to be believed by fishermen, for they of all humans know that if you cast your line often enough you'll some day be rewarded.

Ellie was tall and straight like an Indian. Her hair was coal black, and so were her eyes, which were big and luminous. She had high color in cheek and lip and she was very good to look at. Her insolent laugh was part of her challenge to the male.

For several years Ellie came and went at her own pleasure. Her family had lived for many years in the village. She was a good hand, and a job in the mill was hers to command. Every once in a while she went away. The family said she told them that she had a better job at another mill in some other part of the State, but the real situation was evident to others, if, indeed, not to them.

With the confirmation of suspicions, employment had to be denied her, but the overseer of the department in which she worked stoutly refused to discharge one so competent and so well behaved in the mill. A presidential order to the superintendent settled that issue. Then Ellie went to live at the house of an old crone, not far from the village, whose real business was disguised under fortune telling.

A little sister of Ellie went to the Community Director and begged her to take Ellie in hand. Matters had gone so far that it seemed like a hopeless undertaking, and certainly a tremendous responsibility.

However, soon thereafter the Community Director drove up before the house of the old crone and sent a message in to Ellie to come out to the car. After a long time she came, defiant:

"What do you want with me?"

"Come on, Ellie, I want you to go somewhere."

"I ain't got time."

"I wish you'd take time. Get in."

And in the peace and the sunshine of a country road they talked the matter over. From there a trip to a clinic where Ellie was retained.

Upon release she disappeared before any adjustment could be thought through or made. As presupposed, the effort had been in vain!

But after a while letters began to come to the little sister, three or four a year for a couple of years, and in them a message to the Community Director: "Tell her 'Hello'; I am getting on fine." But what did that mean? Was it insolence? Was it resolution?

About four years later one day I was asked to step to the door. There in a car with several people sat Ellie. The cordiality of her greeting and the pride with which she said, "I want that you should meet my husband"!

"Howdy do, Ma'am. These yere," indicating "several with the sweep of his hand, "are the children by my first wife. *We* sure are proud to meet *you*." After a little chat they drove off to their farm, but the inflection of his words lingers yet. Merely a formal utterance, but if my imagination does not trick me the way in which he spoke, the emphasis on *we* and *you*, expressed volumes of gratitude. At least it meant he understood that a real bond existed between us.

\* \* \* \* \*

I wish you could know "The Old Lady." That is how

she is referred to by her husband and that is, in truth, exactly what she is. I do not exaggerate when I say that I have never heard a voice more pleasantly modulated than hers, nor ever talked with anyone who more finely kept the conversation above the village gossip.

At her doorstep is a galaxy of blossoms, never cut until she has drawn on her gloves, never hoed until she has donned fresh apron and sunbonnet.

"The children laugh at me, Miss Margy, but in my day folks was raised to be particular," is her apology. "Do come into the house and let me fetch you a drink of cool water."

Her house is order itself, and on the beds are spread beautiful old hand-woven coverlids, betokening a better, bygone day.

It is romance to hear her tell of that day, not with boasting nor repining, but just the entertaining recital of how Great-Aunt Harriet wore a plum-colored silk from Providence, Rhode Island, to Charleston, South Carolina, and how she carried the baby in a basket in the carriage which Uncle Leonard engaged to carry them from Charleston into the backwoods of the Piedmont, where, as history tells us, "in 1815 he built a mill of seven hundred spindles, the first textile plant in the Piedmont."<sup>1</sup>

"The Old Lady's" husband is a carpenter, proud of his workmanship, and skilled as were the cabinet makers who learned their trade before these days of flimsy building. His character and ability are equal in potentiality to her refinement, and their many children rightly bear the hall-mark of good birth and breeding.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two neighbors were nursing their babies on the vine-covered porch of a mill cottage. One was the mother of three little tots, the other had daughters just entering their teens. The conversation turned to the subject of happiness.

<sup>1</sup> Landrum, J. B. O., *History of Spartanburg County*, p. 158.

Said the younger, the wife of a rapidly rising young man in the mill, and the mother of the little children, "I go to the movies and come home just sure I'd rather have little, as I have, and the babies and So-and-So than to be rich."

Said the older, with a far-away look in her eyes, "Yes, I think you do feel that way, *when the children are little.*"

\* \* \* \* \*

There never was a girl at the mill who wore prettier shoes than Ann. She was well dressed, too, and neatly groomed. Her family was among the first settlers at the mill. There were many hands to work, a good mother to keep house, and things were very comfortable and happy in that home. The other children married and moved to homes of their own. Ann refused her suitors and assumed the care of her mother.

For years she tended her looms regularly. In her yard there were carefully nurtured roses and jonquils and violets. Behind the house the garden, with both Summer and Winter vegetables, put that of many a neighboring man to shame. When the mother became bed-ridden Ann added nursing and housework to the weaving and the gardening. "Mammy won't be here always, and I want to do what I kin."

Her independence was a barrier between her and the neighbor women, who offered friendship. She wanted them to think her gruff and she tells with a wink and a slap on the back that many have thought her "rough". Perhaps they could not know that in a chestnut-bur there is a lining soft as velvet. In other environments Ann would have been a capable, militant kind of modern woman.

She has never complained of her burdens, but has been proud of her strength to carry them. Always it was the same, year in and year out. While the section man tended her looms Ann would step down to the house to see that all was well with her mother.

Then, as the mother grew more dependent there could be



only half-days of work in the mill for Ann, and a long hard time to make ends meet. Her hair whitened too rapidly, but she asked help with her burden from no one.

"I ain't worryin' about the rent. Mr. Law and the Super ain't goin' to run us off. They know old Ann ain't quit 'em. Me and my Mammy's been here too long for that. Why, child, this here's *home* to us," a sentence started in bravado, but ending with a lump in her throat.

After the mother died Ann stayed on in the four-room cottage and no one thought of asking her to do otherwise. When the loneliness got unbearable she went to the office and asked a few weeks' leave of absence. She wanted to visit kinfolks in Georgia. "I'm goin' the rounds," she said, "and I'm goin' in August. There's bed kiver a plenty then and there mightn't be in winter. Not all of 'em's got as much as Ann."

So she filled a box with biscuits and fried chicken and started off—in August.

The day I came away from the mill a vase on my office desk was filled again with a certain kind of roses. I take it Ann had come back from Georgia.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back in the days before the turbulence of the Reconstruction period, a high-strung, sensitive young professor in a local university hugged to his heart all the traditions, the romance, the chivalry of the aristocratic Old South. Visionary he was, and happy in his academic world.

Plunged into the blood and beastliness of war, his spirit shattered. To him the aftermath of war seemed intolerable, the very existence of colleges was questioned, and he withdrew into the mountains of the Blue Ridge, where in the beautiful valley of the French Broad River a little school offered refuge.

In the course of time he married a bright, vivacious moun-

tain child, gay antithesis to his melancholy. His oldest son he named for the university where life had held so bright a promise. Children came fast into the little mountain home, and it was hard for one who had held education in such high esteem to see his family deprived of intellectual and social contacts.

A labor scout took a message of radiant promise to the people of the French Broad Valley; a good school, good homes, good churches, high wages and ready money in abundance were within the reach of all at the mill he represented. To fail to grasp the opportunity would be to slap good fortune in the face.

In the situation the school teacher saw a ray of hope for his brood, but the mountain wife cried heart-brokenly in the prospective degradation of becoming "factory folks." After brief residence at the mill which had drawn them to its opportunities, the family moved to Saxon, to cast its lot in the development and the moulding of a new community.

The children were put to work in the mill during the long summer holidays, but until the death of the father they were among the few regular attendants at school. Before his children he ever held the ambition of their re-birth into the position which he felt had been denied them in the ruthlessness of war. Two of the boys were old enough to catch the fire of his ambition, but when they were well along the way of elementary education, a long, slow illness, probably pellagra, although it was not then recognized as such, overtook the father, and upon the children fell the burden of supporting a family of eleven.

As might be expected by virtue of heredity and environment, this is a family of dominant personalities. The eldest son went on with his education, borrowing money from the president of the mill, and working in the weave shop during vacations to repay it. After graduating from the State Uni-

versity he won a fellowship at Clark (Worcester, Mass.) and there took his degree of Master of Arts. Then he became principal of various schools in the county and later in the city of Spartanburg.

The second son is an ascetic. He works in the weave shop, but no monk of old ever carried forward with more zeal and fervor the banners of religion. He is well versed in Bible and ecclesiastical literature and around his leadership, broad and sympathetic in civic and industrial matters, rallies a large and loyal following.

Another brother, irresistibly likable and easy-going, has marked sporting proclivities, and was at one time a professional ball-player.

The eldest girls in the family have married good, honest citizens, second hands and bosses in various mills. Their households are bed rock in the communities, but none of their children, several of whom are in their teens, show any disposition for higher education. They are allowed to follow their preference to go to work in the mill rather than to go to high school. They wear good clothes, have automobiles and other modern luxuries.

The youngest daughter of this family graduated from high school four years ago, where her marked literary ability won her much attention. She declined to go to college, did secretarial work for a couple of years and has returned to the weave shop. In this girl are combined a social graciousness and a mental alertness that cause one to wonder if she and the job are not mismated; yet voluntarily and thoughtfully she returned to it after having equipped herself for another occupation. Her orchestra is a flourishing organization among the young people.

Like this girl, the youngest son of the family also declined to go to college, where his older brothers wished to send him. Instead he went to work in the mill, bought a Ford car, and reads fiction ravenously; and who knows but that he has most wisely chosen his path?

Once a year the educator, or the churchman, or the sport, or the little brother just graduated from high school and weaving to pay for his car, takes the quaint old mountain grandmother, whose husband "owned the finest yoke of oxen on the French Broad," back to her legal residence, where she claims her confederate pension. As one sees them riding along, and thinks of them in all the richness of their personality, and against their background, immediate and remote, arise the questions: What is the ultimate potentiality of a stock like this? What should be the equilibrium between it and the industrial community upon which they have made so definite an impress, and in which they have been able to at least partially realize the ambitions which led them there?

\* \* \* \* \*

And now we shall leave these people of the mill, some of them there by tricks of misfortune, others there by reason of their nature, and go on to their organizations and their institutions, and last of all, to their games and pleasures through which perhaps we really get to know the human being best.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE CHURCHES

One cannot live long at a cotton mill without coming to real approbation, if not genuine envy, for the sincerity of religion which the people possess. There is no vague perplexity or academic questioning to sap salvation or condemnation of virility. The doctrines are puritanic. Card-playing and dancing are damned, and at the frequent protracted meetings which last two or three weeks twice a year, conversions are wrought with emotion and eloquent oratory. However, the simplicity of the belief is beautiful in the completeness with which it fills a human need, and in the happiness which it supplies.

Participation in religious worship has not been caked in conventional ceremony. The music carries joyful convic-

tion, while the prayers of spinner and weaver seem to bring Heaven very close to those to whom its glories mean so much. Henry Van Dyke knew the peace and the comforting assurance of religion like that when he wrote,

Often the King of that country comes out from his tireless host,  
And walks in this world of the weary, as if He loved it most;

He cancels the curse of Eden, and brings them a blessing  
instead;

Blessed are they that labour, for Jesus partakes of their bread.<sup>1</sup>

Almost every village has a Baptist and a Methodist church, usually built with the cost shared between mill and congregation. If there are a few people of other denominations, such as Presbyterians, they have affiliation with the nearby churches in the city. Here and there the Holiness Sect has established itself.

At Saxon Mills the status of the churches in 1926 was: Methodist Church membership 308, average attendance 175, Pastor's salary (paid by church members only) \$1,800, raised for missions \$620.00, Orphanages \$35.00, Education \$210.00, Aged Ministers \$110.00, Literature \$55.00, Expenses \$465.00. In 1922 this church subscribed \$1,600 to the Educational Movement, and \$5,500 to the Missionary Movement, payable in five years. This church is also one of the twenty-five churches in the district supporting a missionary in Brazil.

Figures for the Baptist church show a membership of 300, with an average attendance of 150, Pastor's salary of \$1,800, raised for Missions \$500.00 and for expenses \$812.00.

Other denominations represented in the village are, Presbyterians 19, Holiness 15, Catholics 11, Episcopalians 5.

<sup>1</sup> Van Dyke, Henry, *The Tilling of Felix*.

## POLITICS

One of the grossest misrepresentations about the mill people within recent years is the unqualified statement that "they have no political life. They do not vote. They are not interested in politics."<sup>1</sup>

To recognize the falsity of this sweeping generalization one needs only to know with what thorough care the politicians seek out the support of the mill villages, or to see how even gubernatorial candidates include in their itinerary addresses at most of the mills.

On the day before election in 1926 one such candidate made follow-up addresses at thirty mill villages in Spartanburg County, in addition to his previous engagements in those places. It is said that "Cole Blease knew more factory operatives than any man in South Carolina. He hunted them out and cultivated their personal acquaintance."<sup>2</sup>

In 1926 in Spartanburg County slightly more than one-third of all the votes cast in the entire county in the Primary Election were from the mill precincts, the figures of the Democratic Executive Committee giving a total ballot of 13,117 votes cast, with 4,754 from the mill-village boxes. At Saxon Mills three-fifths of the eligible voters enrolled, as against an enrollment of two-thirds of all the eligible voters in the entire county. Some of the women vote, but their interest is still rather dormant.

Whether a person lives at the mill or not has very little to do with his use of the franchise, unless, indeed, we grant that at the mill his vote is sought more diligently than it would have been in the country. Politics at the mill is like politics everywhere, the intelligence of the vote depending on education and enlightenment. However, in a solid-party state the people vote largely for the person to whom they have taken

<sup>1</sup> Tannebaum, Frank, *Darker Phases of the South*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Snowden, Yates, *History of South Carolina*, p. 1058.

a liking, and party candidates cannot hope to stand on platform alone. Thus the personal equation is stressed and man-to-man acquaintance is of greater value.

A possible danger in the mill situation is the preponderance of voting power lodged in non-property-holding citizens who have had little financial experience, and who are almost untouched by direct taxation, since the rent they pay is only nominal. This state of affairs was strikingly presented in two sections of Spartanburg County a short time ago, when residents of adjacent counties, wishing to increase their assessed valuation, attempted to have mill property in Spartanburg County voted by the population of those mill villages into the neighboring counties. Be it said to the credit of the voters that their inherent sense of justice prevented the break, although both the issues were hot and closely contested and only six votes decided the matter in the largest section.

In 1912 the people of Saxon Mills felt a new thrill of pride when W. Simpson Rogers, one of their own young men, was elected over strong and influential opponents as County Representative to the General Assembly of South Carolina.

During his first term he succeeded in having passed the \$1,000,000 bond issue for good roads in Spartanburg County, a measure so progressive at that time that the State was electrified and his future political triumphs jeopardized. However, after serving as Representative for two terms, during which he introduced legislation for night schools in the industrial communities, and lay-by schools for the adult illiterate farmers, he was elected Senator. In that capacity for ten years he continued his efforts along educational lines, and submitted the proposition by which the General Hospital in Spartanburg County was established. For a time he was an advocate of the short working day, but after the reduction to fifty-five hours a week in the textile industry, he stated that his constituency was no further interested. He was known

as the champion of the common people, but he enjoyed the confidence and the admiration of many others. There were strong indications that he would have reached Congress had his career not been cut short by death in the Summer of 1926.

In 1924 Dewey Foster, another operative in the Saxon Mills, was elected to the House, and in 1926 he was re-elected. One plank in his platform is worthy of attention, as it dealt with a bill for workmen's compensation. However, it is undoubtedly true that he was elected on personality rather than platform.

Also elected as Representative on the 1926 ticket was Olin Johnson, who had worked in the Saxon Mills before going to college and into Law. Two other candidates among the twelve on the ticket were from other mill villages.

Narrowly defeated in 1926 for the office of County Superintendent of Education was a man who for four years has been the principal of one of the largest city schools in Spartanburg, after having made a record in the county schools. As a youngster of ten he came to Saxon Mills from the mountains of North Carolina. Alternately he worked in the mill and went first to high school and then to the University of South Carolina. From there he went to Clark University in Massachusetts and took the degree of Master of Arts.

Because of these political aspirants it must not be thought that Saxon Mills is a breeder of politicians. No one from the management has ever set the example of running for public office, although the chief executive told the boys' debating society long ago that he looked forward to the day when they should have representation from among their number, instead of having to entrust their interests to the self-appointed guardians of the working-man's rights.

For the most part the political ambitions of the mill people are based on a government close to the ground, on their self-



respect and self-confidence and the developing leadership among them. Their politics are like politics everywhere. Methods do not differ, nor are the results more Utopian.

\* \* \* \* \*

# LAW AND ORDER

The enforcement of law and order in a mill village would fill a volume with rare incidents illustrating the fact that it is an inherent tendency in the South to look to men rather than to abstract principles.

Rudyard Kipling's poem, "Norman and Saxon," gives the clue to the whole story. The Norman Baron is dying—(1100 A. D.)—and in speaking to his son of his heritage of the broad English acres won at Hastings, he says :

But before you go over to rule I want you to understand this:—

The Saxon is not like us Normans. His manners are not so polite.

But he never means anything serious till he talks about justice and right.

When he stands like an ox in the furrow with his sullen set eyes on your own,

And grumbles, "This isn't fair dealings," my son, leave the Saxon alone.

You can horsewhip your Gascony archers, or torture your Picardy spears,

But don't try that game on the Saxon; you'll have the whole brood round your ears.

. . . . .

But first you must master their language, their dialect, proverbs and songs.

Don't trust any clerk to interpret when they come with the tale of their wrongs.

Let them know that you know what they're saying ; let them feel that you know what to say.

Yes, even when you want to go hunting, hear 'em out if it takes you all day.

. . . . .

Appear with your wife and the children at their weddings and funerals and feasts.

Be polite but not friendly to Bishops ; be good to all poor parish priests.

Say ' we,' ' us ' and ' ours ' when you're talking instead of ' you fellows ' and ' I.'

Don't ride over seeds ; keep your temper ; and *never* you tell 'em a lie.

Not so much because of his position as because of the strength of his personality and his ability to settle problems (fundamental qualities of leadership) the president or the superintendent of the mill has been turned to by the people to deal with various kinds of misconduct in the village. If good results are not obtained from him they seek among the executives for another leader, thus by trial and error delegating to some one person regulative authority among them. This applies particularly to personal and domestic troubles. There is also the opinion shared by the management and the people that the owners of the property should keep the place decent and orderly for its inhabitants. These two feelings converge to place the responsibility of law and order on some one executive, who finds himself acting somewhat in the capacity of the dean of the village. All that is expected of this leader is sometimes overwhelming.

There has been but little grave criminality at Saxon Mills. Mischief, vandalism, vagrancy, the over-celebration of a holiday, have usually been settled in the mill office, although the people do not hesitate to use the county magistrate's court in cases where personal rights are violated.

If a case is too serious for local adjustment it is turned over to the proper jurisdiction of the law, where it is settled on technical grounds, rather more than with regard to the human potentialities. Sometimes the results do not justify the means, especially in cases of juvenile delinquency, not because of inadequacy in the court system but because of the psychology of the culprit and the attention of the community thus attracted to him.

If the informal regulation of conduct within the mill village seems paternalistic it is misunderstood. If it should become autocratic the village inhabitants would pack up and move out from under it. Ostracism is a valuable social weapon, used most effectively by the mill people in all their human relationships, among themselves and toward all others. Standards of conduct are fixed at the point of equilibrium between an enlightened leadership and those actions which are acceptable to the majority. A mill village is a democracy; but to really know this one must be of it.

Saxon Mills has taken up each problem of social maladjustment in the light of its individuality, always bearing in mind the man-to-man appeal and the personal equation so basic in all Southern relationships.

Around the president has localized the regulation of the problems at Saxon Mills; sometimes he has applied the solution personally, in other instances he has delegated the responsibility to a representative acceptable to the people. However, a final personal presentation of the matter is never denied if a satisfactory solution is not otherwise worked out. "I knew Mr. Law wouldn't stand for *that*" acts as a governor on us all within limits—superintendent, bossman, social worker, doffer boy. If we don't get a square deal we pack up and move. Sometimes we move because we do get a square deal. That is one of the benefits of not owning a house. That is one of the advantages of the industrial

homogeneity in the Piedmont. Unemployment to any great extent among the mill people is an abnormal situation, which has seldom been present in this section; and it is seldom difficult, and usually too easy, to get a job at another mill. Less informal requirements of employment would do several things to the labor and social conditions of the textile Piedmont.

Prohibition has done away with much rowdyism at the mill, leaving gambling and the misdirected effervescence of youth as the most common misdemeanors. Not because they are cotton-mill boys but because they are human and American and young the boys of the mill village get into mischief. Many of them have never before lived within the pale of organized society. Their spirit of self-reliance and courage is charged with qualities of leadership, while clannish proclivities furnish the supplementary elements for a gang.

In the early days of cotton-mill villages most communities had their policeman. His animosity added spice to membership in a gang, while his love of authority was apt to make him a little over-zealous in the performance of his duties. Now with telephones and automobiles lessening distance, most villages have dispensed with local constables and rely upon the county officers in emergency.

The peace and order in cotton-mill villages is an inspiring index to the character of their people. Self-respect and decency control the situation. One walks along the streets at night in the same peace and order that he would find in a residential district of the better sort in a city. Now and then a little rowdyism asserts itself around the community center, whether this is the community building or the hanging-out place in villages where there is no other social center.

Back in the days of liquor, misconduct was more wicked and possibly more interesting, certainly more exciting.

An oyster supper given by the good ladies of the Baptist Church was turned topsy-turvy by a young chap, hilarious with Saturday-night good cheer. On Monday morning in the President's office he was given the option of dismissal from the village or paying the amount of the anticipated profits from the supper of which his misconduct had deprived the Church. The Treasury of the Baptist society profited immediately, and as time went on the combined influences of age and prohibition and a little more socialization resulted in a greater social gain when a deacon in the Baptist church was made of this chap. However, not all incidents have such a rosy ending.

During the same period a suitcase of liquor was brought into the village store one Saturday afternoon. After much obnoxious conduct, the offenders were made to surrender the liquor to the mill authorities. The suitcase was locked up in the office safe for a few days, while the boys sat on the needles and pins of suspense, and the community wondered. Then the leader was singled out and given his option of being expelled from the village or carrying his suitcase into the mill yard and smashing every bottle of whiskey on a rock in plain view of the mill windows. There was no docile response, but the deed was done, the mill furnishing an interested gallery. The object lesson was wholesome, court expenses were obviated and the boy was spared a criminal charge, for which he and his family are thankful to this day.

Various ways have devised themselves in dealing with cases of misconduct. Always the matter is talked over with the offender, and he is given a chance to right the wrong in so far as possible and to change his way of doing. Repetition of the misdemeanor may result in reference to county or state law, or expulsion from the village. The latter is not subjectively constructive social work, but at least it prevents the contamination of a whole barrel of apples by one bad one.

With the development of social ideals in a mill village it seems only fair to set up some regulatory agency akin to student government. At Saxon an experiment along this line is giving results that are interesting and indicative of many sterling principles of justice and co-operation and ideals of citizenship among the mill people.

With the Community Director, whose field is community interest, a round-table discussion is held by all the parties to any misdemeanor. Sometimes only the delinquents are asked to attend. In more serious cases, if they are minors, they are asked to come with one parent. The case is always stated as a community department problem needing a solution in the light of their judgment, reason and helpful guidance.

Situations of fascinating interest develop. There have been tears and black looks and parental threats, explanations and promises and explosions of wrath and amazing frankness. The interplay of the influences of the parties on each other reflects various individual attitudes. Penalties are self inflicted by the group; sometimes it is sharing the cost of replacing broken window-panes or more serious damage to property, or paying for missing recreational equipment. The carpenter appraises the damage and in person presents the itemized claim to the Round-Table Group, his dignity and solemnity overawing even the Chair.

Two adamant principles are applied to this round-table procedure. As little as possible is said by the Chair, and after adjournment there is no further discussion of the matter between the Chair and any of the parties concerned.

An illustration of some dramatic and humorous aspects occurred when the village concentrated attention on the gambling of a dozen men, ranging in age from sixteen to sixty. Most of them were heads of families, and all of them quite desirable operatives. Hesitancy in taking the matter

up with men sufficient to be captains of their souls resulted in increasing insistence from the good citizens, who feared the demoralization of their young people.

So the men were summoned to a round-table discussion. As each came in and awoke to the realization that this was a familiar grouping in unfamiliar surroundings, sheepish grins were exchanged so that it seemed as if :

Hearts don't change much after all,  
Men are only boys grown tall.

After a discussion of the matter, entered into with disengaging frankness by all present, the conclusion was reached that gambling was a matter to be decided according to individual opinion as to right and wrong, that arrest by county authorities was not a very serious matter, but that gambling was undoubtedly against the best interests of the community.

The suggestion was advanced by one of the men that if they repeated the offense they should be required to forfeit residence in the village. In sporting language they said that should become a rule of the game. In good faith the Chair had to accept their proposition; and, of course, later on, also in good faith, the ruling had to be applied to two of them.

Just as the conference broke up, the oldest man in the group, dignified, of rather prepossessing appearance, white hair and moustache, mischievous blue eyes, lingered in the doorway to confidentially speak these words to the Chair, "It said in my old Blue-Back Speller that Old Dog Tray was a pretty good dog but he got shot for keeping bad company." No other comment, no other explanation, but ever since, when "Old Dog Tray" and the Chair meet, a twinkle of amusement passes between them, a flash of understanding and appreciation that is a bond of real friendship and mutual confidence.

Where is human nature more refreshing than at the cotton mill? Where is there more genuine courtesy or more sincere appreciation of leadership? The people are frank and just. They resent only unfair accusation. As stated previously, as the mill people see it, right is right and wrong is wrong. In their eyes half-way grounds are contemptible.

There is almost no juvenile delinquency among the girls in the mill village. This is due to several causes, among which are the unawakened self-assertion of the girls, a closer parental control than is exerted over their brothers, and the desire for social approval.

Sex irregularities run a thread of scarlet through the regulation of community social standards. Experience has proven that the most satisfactory method of dealing with this problem is by refusing work and residence to persons of that kind. The proximity of the houses creates a barrier against moral laxity, and when a community has established a reputation for clean living, the problem largely takes care of itself. Public opinion does many things better than a policeman.

During the World War social problems were accentuated in the little village of Saxon, when Camp Wadsworth, with its sixty thousand troops of New York's best and worst, was located less than a mile from the mill. There was a general complexity of sophistication on one hand and unsophistication on the other. The hardest cases were the camp followers, who sought boarding places in the village. The vigilance of the authorities of the mill, and the co-operation of the officers in command of the camp averted any catastrophe, although there were many intense situations bordering on it. The effects of living on the edge of a military encampment have not even yet worn off in this little community.

The most serious social disorder at Saxon Mills was some



twenty years ago, when the mill was being enlarged by a contractor employing negro laborers from outside the village.

One Saturday noon, as everyone went home for the half-holiday, one of the negro men criminally assaulted a young white girl on her way through a wooded stretch from the mill to her home about a quarter of a mile in the country.

Within a short time the negro was caught by the paymaster of the mill and a clerk from the store, neither of whom was armed. As they brought him from the woods, fighting like a fiend, there were several suggestions to lynch him. Just at that moment the officers of the law rode up on horseback and the negro was surrendered into their hands to be taken to the jail.

In the meantime the news spread like wildfire. A posse sprang into action, a message was 'phoned from the mill to its president, who was at that moment in town. He hastily got into his buggy, picked up the ex-sheriff, a man of recognized courage and unusual strength of character, and hastened toward the mill. Half-way they met the posse. Every man at Saxon Mills was in it, armed with shotguns, pistols, clubs and every other conceivable weapon at hand. They were grim and silent and determined. There was no disorder, nor rowdiness.

Face to face with them, the president and the sheriff halted. Standing up in his buggy the president of the mill urged the crowd to let the law take its course; he told of the fortification of the jail and that storming it would mean certain death to some of them. A tall, bent, wiry mountaineer, black slouch hat, drooping moustache, stepped close to the buggy, "I love that gal like I do my own daughter. I am ready to die." For a moment there was dramatic silence. Then the president asked those who would trust him to see that justice was rendered by the law to turn

back to the mill with him. There was a shifting among the ranks. A few men stepped toward town, the rest faced about and slowly went up the hill, personal loyalty to a leader struggling with impassioned determination. The few going toward town shot their guns into the air and yelled. "There is no danger in that," said the sheriff, "the tide is turned."

That night there was much rioting around the county jail, but it was not by the Saxon people. The Hampton Guards, Spartanburg's Militia, were called out to defend the jail, and three boys in the village of Saxon refused to muster, well knowing that later they would be courtmartialed.

Telegraphic request from Mr. Law to the Governor for a special term of court to try the negro was answered in the affirmative. When the day for trial arrived the court-house grounds looked like a military encampment. On the lawn were several companies of State Militia, and in the court room, packed to fullest capacity with civilians, the presence of the soldiers was foreboding.

The prisoner was brought in and excitement swept the crowd into intensity. Then the girl, protected between the sheriff and the president of the mill, entered the court room. Social dynamite awaited one spark.

Judge Shempart, a man of unquestioned courage, arose from the bench and with forceful dignity addressed the militia: "This is a most unusual occurrence in a court of justice. I cannot admit that the fear of violence in a law abiding community like Spartanburg justifies it. I ask the officers to withdraw their troops."

The negro was convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary for life. Within ten years he was among the one thousand and seventy-eight prisoners pardoned during the administration of Ex-Governor Cole L. Blease, and is said to have immediately migrated North.

Thus was repaid the faith of a common people in the

justice of their law. It will never be possible to persuade that group of men, who had proven themselves so amenable to enlightened leadership, that it would not have been better to string the negro up on the nearest tree. The most rational one among them is strongly of that opinion. And yet no mill community in Spartanburg County has ever lynched a negro.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE STORE

As a social institution, the store in the mill village exerts an important influence. While we are not interested here in the economics of the mill store, it is not amiss to say that the store has, over a long period of years, made a legitimate profit. To do so requires turning the stock—inventoried at \$24,000—over five times a year, and carrying a line that can compete in variety and quality and price with the nearby city stores, the vegetable wagons from the country, the mail-order houses, and the small merchants who carry on a spasmodic guerrilla performance around the border of the mill village.

Primarily the village store was intended for the convenience of the people. Practically it is a point of great educational diffusion. The kind and variety of food procurable from the store largely determines the diet of a family. Over a period of ten years it has been interesting to notice how the store has modernized the fare on the tables in our village. In many a home which before its recent advent to the mill subsisted only on the far-famed Southern "hog and hominy," one now finds in common use mayonnaise, canned soups, macaroni, oranges and bananas, vegetables, cereals, wheat and brown-loaf bread and rolls. In the meat market, equipped with modern refrigeration, are always milk, eggs, cheese, pork and beef, with fish and oysters in season. At the soda fountain, in itself a startling

revelation of hygienic principles, thirst is cooled in ways undreamed of a decade ago by most of its patrons. Over its counter is sold an amazing quantity of ice cream, valuably nutritious.

In another department, tooth brushes offer a good suggestion. In another, bright aluminum pans and kettles flash a challenge to the old frying pan to hold its own against them. Window draperies bring the dream of a pretty home within practical reach—but more enumeration is unnecessary. The truth is that the mill people are free spenders, and they feel at ease dealing with the village store. They have confidence in what is offered to them by the clerks, who are their neighbors. The taste of the patrons ranges from the selection of unbleached cotton cloth for underwear by some up to the refined choice of dresses secured directly from a New York connection by others.

Those of us who know from some personal experience how Stephen Leacock felt in the bank can perhaps appreciate the perplexity with which people who have been accustomed to raising their food supply enter into the purchase of all of it with cash. Much of the buying is done indiscriminately and without realization of the total cost. Hence, the frequent exhibitions of irate human nature before the book-keeper's cage on pay day. Since many families state that at the mill their store bill for one month is equal to more money than passed through their hands in an entire year on the farm, is it strange that perspective is lost?

In their way of buying, the mill people reflect the effects of socialization and education. A change in judgment and taste occurs among the adaptable, and while most standards improve, a few show no change, usually true of the people who are habitually "behind at the store." Examination of their budget is very apt to show improper selection of food and clothing, rather than inadequate earnings.

One of the most discouraging characteristics among some of the mill people is a very general irresponsibility toward financial obligation. This laxity might be the result of the system wherein payment for goods charged at the store is collected from the wage ticket in the paymaster's office, were it not for the fact that this system had to be set up as defense against the irresponsibility. Obligations are assumed lightly and borne more so. Consequently small merchants on the outskirts of the village periodically fail, barber shops go out of business and accommodating little loans fade into oblivion. Insurance agents, secretaries of secret orders, physicians and dentists fall victim to the easy-going procrastination of the people who have not yet learned the ethics of a money system, nor the self-discipline of voluntary payment. This is improvidence, not intentional dishonesty. If the creditor persistently goes after the money it is usually paid in a good-natured way.

Entirely different from these are the dead beats. Their way of doing has been conspicuous enough to coin the colloquialisms "movin' between sundown and sunup" and "movin's cheaper 'n payin' rent." Their unpaid debts are carried as suspended accounts, for pursuit for enforced collection would be a farce. It is encouraging to observe that the size of this group is diminishing.

The village store is a center of accommodation, with its substation postoffice, its public telephone, laundry agency and community bulletin board, in addition to its variety of stock and bi-daily delivery service. Moreover a social value lies in the leadership of its clerks in the community. These men, ten at Saxon, are close to the people, usually of them. Their ambition and progressiveness are inspiration and example. Their citizenship in the community is constructive. Many mill executives trace their knowledge of human nature to experience gained from early positions in the mill store.

As a social institution the mill store justifies its existence, for not only is it a community convenience and a process of education for buyer and seller, but it is also a positive agent in effecting social change.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE SCHOOL

The public school movement in South Carolina got a sluggish start in Colonial days, was penalized in the Sixties, and has not yet in the Twentieth Century completely shaken off its handicap.

In 1811 permission was granted by the State for the establishment of free public schools in those parishes and districts which cared to undertake and support the project. It was well understood that the free public schools were intended for the poor, and in the sharpness of the distinction between such schooling for the lower white classes and the private education of the aristocracy the public school system was branded as ignominious. A few parishes, with some feeble aid from the State, exerted themselves to build free public schools, but in 1835 Governor McDuffie deplored the lack of use of them. Facts were investigated and discussed, but no change was made until 1853, when Governor John Lawrence Manning tried to blaze a trail through the deep-rooted conviction that the public schools of the state were "an eleemosynary proffer, rather than a fountain flowing for all, at which they may partake freely."<sup>1</sup>

As a result of his urgent appeal in behalf of education the small legislative appropriation was doubled, but no change in attitude or legislation pertaining to the school system took place until 1868, when a constitution, based on that of Ohio, was framed under the Reconstruction Acts of Congress. Rather grudgingly this was ratified by the State in the same

<sup>1</sup> *History of South Carolina*, Yates, Snowden, p. 1153.

year. By this constitution of 1868 the public-school system, already struggling under stigmatism, was dealt a solar-plexus blow, which bid fair to cripple it for life.

On paper, Article X of the Constitution of 1868 is progressive in its measures for "a liberal and uniform system of free public schools," and its important Section IV, reading that "it shall be the duty of the General Assembly to provide for compulsory attendance, at either public or private schools, of all children between the ages of six and sixteen years, not physically or mentally disabled, for a term equivalent to twenty-four months at least."<sup>1</sup>

So far so good, until we reach Section X providing that "all the public schools, colleges, and universities of this State, supported in whole or in part by the public funds, shall be free and open to all the children and youths of the State, without regard to race or color."

And so, unfortunately, the sentiment of the whites, which had been at best but lukewarm toward public school education, turned stone-cold, and compulsory school attendance committed the unpardonable error of making a first appearance in South Carolina without acceptable letters of introduction.

For nearly a decade after 1868 things went from bad to worse, with education and all other matters handled by the State. Legislative meetings were a farce, and administrative proceedings kakistocratic. Public finance was gross corruption to such an extent that by 1876 in the Department of Education alone the deficit was nearly \$500,000. Probably no other State has ever been called upon to weather such a tempest.

In 1876, as the negro militia filed out of the south door of the capitol in Columbia, the State pulled herself together, but the public school system has recovered slowly. For a

<sup>1</sup> Thorpe, F. N., *Federal and State Constitutions* vol. vi, t, p. 3300.

long number of years expenditures necessarily had to be limited, but the greatest obstruction in the way of educational advance has been the attitude of those people who, without book learning themselves, fail to see why the younger generations need it. To some extent this may be partly due to the brand of education offered, partly to the desire of politicians to keep taxes at a minimum. At any rate the indifference toward school attendance has been imbedded in the mores of the common people and the situation has been most difficult to overcome. It is as if the educational leaders of South Carolina have had to drive their car uphill with the four-wheel-brakes of a pure democracy binding tight and the speed of the engine governed by a complex of individual rights, indifference, and aversion to interference. Added to this situation, bad in itself, has been the infusion of thousands of mountain people from North Carolina and Tennessee who for other reasons accepted illiteracy as a matter of course.

In 1906 the legislature declined to act upon the recommendation of the South Carolina Cotton Manufacturers' Association that a compulsory school-attendance law be passed. As late as 1915 Governor Richard I. Manning met vigorous opposition to the optional local compulsory school-attendance plank in his platform, which, however, succeeded in becoming a law in 1916. At the end of his four-year term in 1920 only one-third of the districts throughout the State had adopted it. In 1921 the first State-wide law went into effect. In 1924 this was coupled with educational requirements for children seeking employment, but the law is still weak in scope and enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

As in other matters of social advance, the leaders in progressive communities saw that they must work out their own salvation, and ambitious districts took upon themselves the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter on "Social Legislation."



control of the education of their children. State aid was accepted, but local funds supplemented legislative appropriations until the tail was almost wagging the dog.

As might be expected, the prosperous parts of the state advanced fastest. Mills in the Piedmont took for their standards those of city schools, rather than the state requirements for county schools. As might further be expected, a pure democracy could see in this situation nothing more than the opportunity to penalize the strong financial sections by making them carry the burden of the backward districts. Consequently the Equalization Bill of 1924, known as the 6-0-1 Act was passed, the idea being that the State should finance a term of six months, the County no months, and the local district one month. Teachers' salaries were fixed on a minimum scale.

Providing that a prosperous district has not been sapped of its resources, or sufficiently humbled by the 6-0-1 Act, it can go on having as much school as it is willing to pay for. Thus South Carolina goes on record as a State compelling a school session of eighty days for children between the ages of eight and fourteen, leaving the enforcement of even this meagre legislation up to the local district. No appropriation is made for teaching music or physical education in the county schools.

That is as things appear on the surface. The actual situation is much brighter. Progressive communities do not limit themselves to the level of the legislation, although in 1925 56.47% of all State appropriations were for schools and colleges. To this amount were added substantial gifts from the mills to the schools in their districts.

In the Piedmont section of South Carolina, where the textile industry is localized, the mill schools do not satisfy themselves with less than a nine-months' term of school, and many have Summer schools of a supplementary nature. In

1925 the annual report of the State Superintendent of Education stated, "Some of our best schools now are mill schools, and some of our most costly school buildings are mill school buildings" — "Almost one-fifth of the children enrolled in the elementary schools are from the industrial communities."<sup>1</sup>

The experience at Saxon Mills is representative. We have noted that the mill erected its modern school building in 1907, at which time 132 of the 150 children under 12 enrolled, and 65 attended regularly. The attractive building and good facilities could not make an appeal strong enough to overcome the dislike of many children toward regular school attendance, or in some instances toward the teacher.

Three years later 51.6% of all the persons of school age were enrolled throughout the schools of the state, and many mills were making the attendance of the children in school a requirement in the employment of their families. Saxon Mills did not resort to this drastic measure, but in 1916 encouraged the patrons of its school to petition for a local application of the compulsory school-attendance law.

In 1925 the enrollment was 325, a number which included all children in the village between the ages of six and fourteen. However, the attendance was only 227, and but 9 children had records of perfect attendance. In the whole State of South Carolina in 1925 "about 30,000 of school age were not in school."<sup>2</sup> This figure includes both black and white children.

Parental indifference and inertia are the despair of the attendance officer who has to respect within reason maternal excuses for the absence of the child from school. The traffic will not bear too much coercion or more will be lost

<sup>1</sup> *Fifty Seventh Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education*, 1925, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

than is gained. Many families from rural sections are indignant when they find that they have moved into a community where school attendance is beyond the minimum requirements of the State Law. It is easier to follow the line of least resistance than it is to keep the children clean enough for school, or to dispense with their help in the household. Besides the parents themselves feel that they have got along pretty well with less book learning than the children already have.

The school at Saxon Mills has eleven teachers, and seven grades are taught. By the time the children have reached this grade, indeed before, a great weeding-out process has taken place by a natural selection. We are confronted with a situation not a theory, and one which is by no means limited to any one section of the country. All over the United States there are thousands who have had but six or seven years of schooling, and even less education, if we accept that term to mean the acquisition of knowledge or the development of faculties. We are also faced with the worse fact that the public school system of the country has tended to educate persons out of one plane without equipping them for adjustment on another. Something "between a hindrance and a help" has been provided, and we complain because of the lack of response among those on whom we have tried to impose a system which they neither wanted nor needed. The best way to whet the educational appetite of the people of South Carolina is to offer them educational opportunities really fitted to the needs of all.

Against this situation the sixth or seventh grade school is defensible. It has provided an equal chance for all to accept a liberal education. It has combed out those children adaptable to higher education, it has fitted them to go into the city high school. What it has done for those who will find the normal use of their faculties on an industrial plane is a challenge for improvement.

Why not recognize the fact that the world has need of "hewers of wood and drawers of water," mechanics, weavers of cotton cloth, if you will, and provide for those future workers a system of schooling that will really educate, make them masters of their crafts, enrich their lives with things of interest and of use to them, instead of further pursuing our negative policy of making them the left-overs, the unsuccessful, the surpassed in a process of natural selection pitched on a plane artificial to the needs of thousands?

Because of these things I cannot deplore the transition of many children of fourteen and fifteen into industry. They are making an escape from something intolerable and useless to them. They are exercising an inflexible law of self-adaptation. The deplorable fact is that these children are the proof of the inadequacy of our public school system. We condemn industry for giving them the chance to find themselves, while we overlook those things which we as educators have allowed to hasten them into industry.

In 1926 seven mill schools undertook "full-time Textile Training." The results are awaited with interest.

This problem is big, involving applied psychology, vocational guidance, and the revamping of our elementary school system, but the need for its solution is not visionary, nor is any problem too big to attack when the future citizenry of an entire State is to be affected, when the place that occupational employment is to hold is at stake, and when the happiness that comes from the normal functioning of all the faculties of thousands depends upon it.

Because of the homogeneity of her people, because of the simplicity of the public school system, unencumbered with great differences of racial, political or religious belief, and because of the necessity of putting a drawing card into education, South Carolina has a wonderful opportunity to work out a real contribution to the educational needs of the

country. To admit that *laissez-faire* controls us is to admit that we are not sincere in our desire for progress.

Going to the city high school from Saxon Mills are twelve children, six from executives' families and six from those of the operatives. In college at present there are fourteen students from the village, nine of whom have worked in the mill for a year or two between high school and college, and during vacation. Four are from executives' families, and ten from those of the operatives.

The Saxon Mills school has adopted the amplified state curriculum, and also teaches public school music, physical education, domestic science and the Palmer method of penmanship. Annual physical examinations with vaccination have been enforced for six years, but within the past year the County Health Unit has taken over this work previously done by the corporation. An annual exhibition of school work is held, together with a play festival, to illustrate organized play and physical education. Costumes are made by the children in their sewing classes, and by the mothers.

In order to attract teachers of superior qualifications, and to further apply its policy of having everyone connected with the mill assume some definite neighborhood responsibility, the Saxon Mills, in 1919, built a Teacherage as a model home in the village.

Everything possible is done to stress the personal equation between the teachers and the village folks. For example, athletic teams going to play other communities used to require the discipline of some man with recognized authority, if the reflection of no discredit on the mill they represented was to be assured. Now two or three teachers go along with the team and conduct has become a matter of trust and chivalry, thus merging education and socialization into a refining influence.

In addition to paying a heavy school tax to the state, pro-

viding the school and the teacherage and all the current expenses of the school year, the mill pays the salaries of the teachers for three months, while the State pays for six.

Night school has been undertaken several times, with varying degrees of success. The demand for it decreases as the day school becomes more efficient. The place that it has often played is illustrated in the case of a man, now overseer, who learned to read after attaining manhood. The ultimate result has now overshadowed the motive, which was no other than because "it sure was hard to have to carry a letter from your girl in your pocket all day before you could find anyone you'd trust to read it." Likewise, in the case of the man who learned to read so that he could know what was written on the movie screen. A significant element in these situations is the existence of a motive more impelling than a desire for education had been in the boyhood of these men.

Vocational classes under state and federal aid have not given the satisfactory results here claimed to have been obtained at some other mills. Lack of sustained interest causes the attendance to dwindle, possibly because interest in the project has not been self-motivated; possibly because the fruits of education are desired without submission to the grind necessary to obtain them.

One of the most conspicuous attempts to wipe out illiteracy among the adults in the mill villages was the establishment of the Textile Industrial Institute about twenty years ago by a Methodist minister, who presented his vision to the manufacturers of Spartanburg. His idea culminated in a part-time school in connection with Saxon Mills. The students work in shifts, alternating a week in the school room with a week in the mill. The school is still in operation under the auspices of the Methodist Church, South. Its pupils number 75, who are employed at the Saxon and the Arcadia Mills. This school boasts among its graduates

several preachers and teachers. Its original purpose of wiping out adult illiteracy has grown into the ambition to become a college.

Clemson, the State College, offers textile courses along technical lines.

Continuation schools in connection with the employment of junior wage earners and the idle time of doffers has been advocated, and in some instances given serious attention to the point of experiment. There seem to be two obstacles standing in the way of success along this line; the indifference of the prospective pupils, who would probably be in school anyway if their ambition for school was genuine, and the overhead cost in proportion to the enrollment. Unless teachers and equipment are of the best the project is futile.

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#### THE COMMUNITY CENTER

Almost as soon as Saxon Mills was built a need for a social gathering place was apparent. With the building of Caston Hall in 1907, a real community center was established on the principle of making the school equipment a real educational and social nucleus. At first the gatherings were largely of the oyster-supper, ice-cream-festival type, sponsored by this or that church organization or fraternal order. This kind of entertainment is still very much enjoyed, but the social activities have been amplified with musical and dramatic programs and community socials and young people's parties on festival dates.

Many of these gatherings are in the hands of the people themselves, others are under the supervision of the community department, which uses as recreational leaders two of the teachers who are employed with that understanding, and certain persons in the village who show evidences of dependable leadership. Two of these last volunteers have been added to the salaried staff of the community department; one

in charge of the playground in the summer months, the other in charge of water sports.

Every evening in the week the community building is opened for a variety of gatherings, except Wednesday, when out of respect to the churches, social activities are suspended in favor of the mid-week prayer meetings. On this evening there is a noticeable reversion to rowdyism and hanging around the village store and street corners, all of which indicates what the leisure hours of the village would soon degenerate into without recreational facilities and leadership.

Besides the ten school rooms in the community building, are the auditorium, the fraternal halls, the domestic science room, used jointly by school and community, the barber shop and the band hall.

Behind the building is a splendid playground, laid out in courts for volley ball, basketball, tennis and horse-shoe pitching. There is no equipment of an elaborate nature, except a few swings for the school children.

On the other side of the playground is a building known as the "Game Shack"—in reality a simple gymnasium dedicated to basketball, indoor baseball and an occasional old-fashioned square dance.

During the day the community center belongs to the children. In the evening it belongs to the adults. The plan works splendidly and is both sound education and sensible economy.

Adjacent to the playground is one of the mill ponds, which has been fitted up for swimming. Like the playground it is lighted for use at night and presents a very attractive appearance. Not far away is the baseball ground.

A possession of which the mill people are very proud is the Honor Roll, inscribed with the names of the boys from the village who served in the World War. Out of sixty-one men enlisted from Saxon, one from the store became a



lieutenant, two from the mill became sergeants and four, corporals. These men were in the Thirtieth Division, which, supported by the Twenty-seventh, broke the famous Hindenburg Line at St. Quentin.<sup>1</sup> After the armistice without exception, they returned to their duties in the mill. However, two of them had been too shattered to stand up under any work very long.

Returning to the discussion of recreation—it was quite a jolt to a recreational leader from industrial New England, where commercial dance halls are popular, to realize that the recreational program at a mill in the South must not include social dancing. A floor and a piano and several mixed couples make entertainment easy, but there is more real fun and sociability in the local way of doing, and while recreational authorities the country over are reviving the old-time games and folk plays, here they are simply surviving. We play “King William was King George’s Son,” “Hog Drover,” and other singing games of a similar nature handed down for generations by word of mouth. We drop the handkerchief and spin the platter and sing together. We have moonlight picnics and weiner roasts. Our recreation is wholesome.

Rather than to suppress the constant undercurrent of the desire of a few to dance, their wish is diverted to an old-fashioned square dance, held one a year, at Christmas, when a general spirit of hilarity is prevailing. Fiddlers and a caller come from the country and set after set is called. The music is the “most persuadinist you ever heard,” and the fun of Running the Black Snake, Do-see-Do, and Bird in the Cage is so hilarious that it adequately explains away any wonder that Fort Duquesne was taken while the soldiers danced.

<sup>1</sup> Report of General John J. Pershing to the Secretary of War of the United States, Nov. 20, 1918. Reprinted in *With the Colors*, Jacobin, Lewis, pp. 289-300.

Akin to this frivolity is the Old Fiddlers' Convention, a custom periodically observed in this section of the country. Prizes are offered by the merchants, and individual performers, trios and "string bands" compete with much rivalry.

In the elasticity of our community life we have had various organizations at various stages of our social development and interest; Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Home Guards, cooking and sewing clubs, community fairs, etc. Fraternal orders have long been of great popularity and most men in the village belong to at least two or three orders. These are, of course, entirely self-supporting.

Detailed information about the fraternal orders is shown in Table III.

TABLE III. FRATERNAL ORDERS AT SAXON MILLS, AUGUST, 1926

<i>Fraternal order</i>	<i>Year of organization</i>	<i>No. original members</i>	<i>Present no. members</i>
Knights of Pythias .....	1904	16	20
Red Men .....	1905	22	30
Woodmen of the World .....	1906	11	150
Masons .....	1922	6	40
Junior Order American Mechanics ....	1923	26	35

Data furnished by Secretaries of the Orders.

In 1920 the overseer of the card room, a man of pronounced musical talent, suggested to the President of the mill that a brass band be organized. A joint committee was appointed from the mill, the fraternal orders and the community department. The matter culminated in the purchase of twenty instruments, the Woodmen of the World and the mill sharing the expense half and half. Since then several members of the band have bought instruments of their own.

Among the original musical aspirants there was only one man who knew one scale, but among them all there was a wonderful willingness to learn. Today the records show that the Saxon Mills' Woodmen of the World Band has been

the official band of the Spartanburg County Fair for four years and has furnished all the music for the State Fair in Columbia for three years. Twice it has been called to Junaluska, North Carolina, the summer gathering place of Southern Methodists. Best of all, through its own plan of financing, by the advertisements of city merchants on the programs, the band is giving semi-weekly concerts at the park in the City of Spartanburg. The character of the music is by no means limited to rag-time. It also plays classical and sacred music, and it gives one a peculiar tug at the heart-strings to attend a band practice, where some twenty men in their working clothes, often covered with lint or grease from the mill, render with genuine depth of feeling "Trovatore," "Poet and Peasant," Sousa's Marches, or the beautiful old Christmas Carols. This music has a decided influence in the village aside from its effects on the bandmen.

Sometimes it has taken all hands and the cook to keep the band from the rocks, but it is a matter of pride that the band has not only been self-supporting but is now even earning for its members, and so the executive committee keeps locked in its closet several dark secrets that have to do with cementing temperamental human nature willing to be subsidized into a musical organization standing on its own reputation and its own ability.

In 1926 the Saxon Woodmen of the World Band was host to the Textile Band Association of South Carolina convening in its Fifth Annual Session from thirty mills in the State. The mill granted a holiday and the whole community entered into the gala occasion. The conduct of the huge crowd would have been a revelation to those not really acquainted with the mill people. Perhaps most surprising of all is the fact that by their own request the village people served a generous basket picnic to six hundred visitors instead of accepting the mill's offer to provide a barbecue. The

efficiency of the ten committees in charge of the occasion was a splendid demonstration of community pride and organization and hospitality.

Commendable branches of the band are the two orchestras which play at the regular services of the village churches leading the singing and popularizing the standard old hymn tunes.

The history of athletics at the mill reads very much like the history of athletics at many colleges. Baseball started as an amateur sport, then it became semi-professional, teams were pampered and mills bid against each other for pitchers and catchers. When pressure became unbearable, the pendulum swung back, but it has been found very difficult to completely stamp out the old ways of doing in favor of clean amateur baseball. The hope lies in getting the younger boys started right and in making the amateur leagues inclusive and workable.

Like many other mills, Saxon got basketball started on sounder principles, and the teams understand that they must be as nearly self-supporting as possible.

The crowning athletic event of the year is when the teams participate in the Southern Textile Basketball Tournament held for three days each February in Greenville for six years past. Some one hundred and fifty teams from Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama compete for titles and cups. Interest runs high, and excitement is intense. There is great evidence of loyalty to state and community, and the cheers and yells rival college enthusiasm. To notice the physical development of the players, to watch their conduct, to sit with these boys and girls at the banquet, to catch the spirit of their youth and freshness and eagerness and then to recall that the great majority of them went to work at a tender age some ten or fifteen years ago causes one to wonder many things.

In its water sports, Saxon Mills started sooner than most communities in the South, mill or urban. At first the swimming caused considerable comment, as did the appearance of the girls' volley-ball team in bloomers. Most of the conscientious objectors have now sensibly modified their opinions, and even the superstition about bathing during dog days is breaking down. We have passed through an evolution from "goin' in washin'" by the few, to swan dives and life-saving exhibitions participated in by the many of all ages.

In the Summer of 1925 the little community of Saxon Mills provided the City of Spartanburg with four life guards for the new municipal swimming pool, while eleven others have passed the American Red Cross examination in life saving.

The extensive enjoyment of water sports has affected the location and equipment of our vacation camp. In the hot summer months there is a natural craving among the mill people for the mountains. Recognizing this, the president of the mill for long years had in mind the vision of some place to which the Saxon people could go for a vacation in the environment which they loved. In 1920 our vacation camp was established on Lake Summit, in the mountains of the Blue Ridge, easily accessible by train and auto. The camp consists of a lodge, accommodating thirty people, supplementary tents being used when needed. Swimming and boating and fishing are the major sports, while mountain hiking is popular.

With the establishment of the camp a system of vacation furlough was put into effect at the mill, making possible for each operative a vacation allowance commensurate with the character of his work. No other phase of our recreational work has given more desirable results than camp life. Significant enough to note is the fact that within the six years

of the history of the camp there has been a conspicuous absence of profanity and off-colored jokes, a situation which made a great impression on the Director of the Richmond School of Social Science during his visit in our camp.

The season at camp opens with a community picnic, promoted by the Sunday schools and the village churches. A holiday is granted, an excursion train is operated, the band provides the music and the picnic table groans under the dinner provided by the good housewives. Practically the whole village moves en masse to spend a day in the mountains.

The recreational activities at Saxon are a good illustration of the attitude of the management toward the self-development of the people. The policy is to do *through* rather than *for* them. As their desires awaken under trained leadership, and assert themselves as needs, an earnest endeavor is made by the management to co-operate with the people in attaining those desires for themselves, whether such need be a basketball, brass-band instruments, churches, electric lights in the houses, or bath tubs.

Our facilities look meagre in comparison with the superfluities given by many companies to their employees, but in comparison with unawakened communities we seem to live a life abundant. Better than by any other one illustration this is shown during the Christmas season by a custom which started simply and has grown amazingly in extent and beauty of spirit.

In front of the mill office stands a tall Norway Spruce. Ever since the days when outdoor community Christmas trees were an innovation, this has been lighted each Christmas eve to shed its Yuletide cheer over the village. The people sing carols around it, and one year a little girls' sewing club put upon its boughs a package containing the quilt they had made to send to an orphanage. The idea took root, and the

next Christmas there were so many suggestions along this line that the names of all the children in a local orphanage were obtained and distributed among the Saxon school children.

For the past five years each Christmas Eve as they go toward their own Sunday school celebrations in their respective churches the people of the village gather at *the* Christmas Tree for the White Gift Service. When the vari-colored lights flash out their message of Christmas love, the school children, numbering some three hundred, pass by the tree in single file, each laying at the foot of the tree a gift for his orphan, while the band softly plays Christmas Carols and the crowd takes them up. Little enough may these school children seem to have themselves, but each child knows that there is someone else with less than he. Then the older people advance and make their gifts of coins or clothing or toys for some orphan in whom they have a personal interest.

\* \* \* \* \*

An old lady, humbly clad in widow's black, stands a little apart from the crowd. Her eyes caress the tree, beautiful always, brilliant for this occasion. Beneath her calm restraint one knows that deep emotions are needing utterance. "My husband helped to set that tree twenty-four years ago come March. I had to come to see hit."

Among the children passing by the tree with gifts are some of her grandchildren. Two others in the orphanage joyfully await the morrow, when, with fruit and the minstrel band, and a real Santa Claus, half the village will come with gifts from Saxon.

## CHAPTER VII

### ASPECTS OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION

THE history of social legislation in South Carolina has been exactly what one might expect of a people but recently supplementing agriculture with industry, and emerging from a hand-to-hand struggle with the problems of a shattered sovereignty. Simultaneous with this was the arrival of thousands of people, genuine old hickory, from the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina.

From the first, legislation has been a strenuous conflict between individualistic backward public opinion and an enlightened minority itself almost too individualistic to be capable of collective action. Social legislation has befallen so many misfortunes in the clutches of short-sighted or selfish politicians that even yet the legal protection of public welfare is not given full confidence. Progressive standards of health, occupational conditions and education have been introduced largely by private, semi-public or local governmental units some time before being adopted as State-wide legislative measures.

Some legislative action affecting various phases of industrial life and occupation began in South Carolina almost with the rise of the textile industry, although not until 1900 did the industry begin to be known and to know itself in the size and strength of its corporate significance.

As early as 1884 a bill to regulate the age of children employed in all factories at 10 years of age was introduced in the House and defeated. In 1887 the House indefinitely



postponed a bill to limit the employment of children under 12 years of age to 10 hours a day in factories. In 1889 a bill to prohibit the employment of children under 14 years of age got no further than the judiciary committee.

Thus far the proposed legislation originated in Charleston, was of a local philanthropic origin, and did not gain much headway except in arousing some State-wide interest in 1887.

During the 90's there was an important movement for the reduction of hours, together with certain limitations upon the employment of women and children. This brought forth some objections from the employers as individuals. Two bills were introduced in 1890 and reported upon unfavorably. After a hearing in which the manufacturers participated a compromise bill limiting the hours for women in cotton or woolen mills to 66 a week and prohibiting the employment of children under 16 years of age was introduced and defeated.

In 1892 a 66-hour-a-week bill for all ages and sexes was passed.

In 1896 a further reduction of hours to 10 a day was attempted but failed.

In 1897 the same bill got no further than the judiciary committee.

Just at this time an interesting situation developed. In the Horse Creek Valley, close to the Georgia line, there is a group of mills which in character, experience and sympathy have belonged more to Georgia than to South Carolina. When organized labor had secured a foothold in Georgia during the 90's it reached across the river and stirred things up in the Horse Creek Valley. The misery and suffering of that time is by-word in the state today, and, as the mill people tell it, Sherman's march left no more harrowing experiences in its wake. But the Federation of Labor was not wholly occupied with conditions in the valley, for it was building up a wider political constituency throughout the state. Its

enemies said it was seeking out new pastures to graze upon. By 1900 child-labor agitation within South Carolina began in earnest. The Senator from Richland, afterwards recognized as the spokesman of organized labor, introduced a bill to prohibit the employment of children under 12 years of age in factories and mines. The enacting words were struck out in the House by a vote of 29 to 8.

In 1901 the Governor took up the subject in his annual message, calling attention to the danger of legislative interference with the family, commending the efforts of the manufacturers to divert child labor from the mills to the schools, insofar as that could be done without compulsory school attendance, and admitting that a prohibitory law as to child labor had become a necessity to protect many children against the greed of "vampire parents."

In the next General Assembly several bills for and against child labor were presented. In 1901 the South Carolina Federation of Labor worked openly for the legislation. Several employers voiced their opposition to the proposals and particularly to its instigators. There were many debates and the "Charleston News and Courier," one of the original advocates of Child Labor restriction, took the side of the opponents of the legislation. It urged that a fair chance be given industry to get on its feet and to work out its problems. The legislature concurred in this opinion and evidently had no desire to kill the goose that was laying the golden eggs, for it went on record as refusing to pass such legislation as that which would prohibit the employment of children under 12 years of age and exempting those of indigent parents. After striking out the clause for compulsory education the Senate passed the bill and referred it back to the House too late for action.

Several things may be read between the lines of this legislative action. It may seem that whenever outside interfer-

ence asserts itself in the political matters of South Carolina a defense complex springs into action befogging the real issues involved; but perhaps a burnt child who does not fear the fire has failed to get the value of the experience. But leaving such reflections to the field of social psychology we may further digress to say that the cotton-mill operatives spared themselves the pains of becoming the bone of contention between their employers and the agents of organized labor by failing to meet their assessments to the point of being thrown overboard by the United Textile Workers in 1903.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the New England industrial interests which were at least cheering on the attempts to lessen unfavorable competition between the New South and the textile East had it very plainly indicated to them that the expenditure of their philanthropic energies in South Carolina was quite unwelcome.

In 1902 a bill fixing the age of employment at 10 was passed. All night-work was forbidden children under 12 years of age.

Child-labor legislation was made an issue of the Democratic campaign of 1903, the governor coming out strongly in its behalf. A bill setting the standard at 12 years of age and exempting children dependent on their own labor and allowing the summer-time employment of children under 12, providing they had attended school for 4 months during the current year and were able to read and write, was passed, the manufacturers expressing their approval and support of this bill. Penalties were imposed upon parents, and upon employers knowingly employing children under 12. Two years were allowed for the adjustment, thus projecting this standard into 1905.

Reformers who had neither confidence in the manufacturers nor a real grasp of the field problems involved in the

<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Holland, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, p. 196.

enforcement of any child-labor law at that time were disappointed in this legislation, although its easy victory was a distinct triumph for the principle of a child-labor law. The passage of this bill is important in many ways. Granting that it was a mild law, we may detect certain sagacity in this very condition. It put legal strength behind the desire of those "builders of a new state" who were sincere in mitigating the evils of child labor. It put the culpable parents on notice. It gave a new conception of the affair to indifferent parents. It gave the schools time to get ready for whatever children might care to attend when employment in the mills was forbidden them. In summary this legislation was a good intermediate step designed to effect a reform without tying up traffic. It is also an illustration of a thoroughly democratic piece of law-making; it was conceived in the spirit of the people; it epitomized their principles; it was to be enacted without superimposed bureaucracy. As efficient legislation the law was inadequate, but it marked a great and significant change in the attitude toward child labor.

In twenty years, indeed in three, if we place the first earnest child-labor discussion in South Carolina at 1900, a long step had been taken by a common people just entering on their transition from an agricultural to an industrial people. Everywhere history shows us that it takes time to change the concept that child labor may be an unrighteous and socially harmful thing instead of the righteous and beneficial antidote to idleness that it has been supposed to be from time immemorial.

Although there were annual attempts to raise the standards no further legislation was enacted until 1909.

That the legislature of those days was not in the hands of the manufacturers is well indicated by two events; the reaction to the Memorial of the Manufacturers in 1906, and

the passage of the Toole Bill in 1907. The memorial, quoted herewith, is interesting as one of the first collective efforts of the manufacturers after their organization into a State Association, and as a sketch of the difficulties of enforcing the Child-Labor Law:

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of The State of South Carolina:*

The undersigned Committee was appointed by a meeting of the South Carolina Cotton Manufacturers, held at Greenville, S. C., June 5, 1906, and representing nine-tenths of the State's spindleage, with instructions to memorialize your honorable body, urging the passage of: 1st, A Compulsory Education Law; 2nd, A Marriage License Law; 3rd, a law requiring the Registrations of Births.

The three subjects will be briefly mentioned in reverse order to the above, the intent of this memorial being, not to enumerate the many arguments which might be advanced in favor of the passage of the laws suggested, but chiefly to put the State's textile manufacturers squarely and definitely on record as favoring, and earnestly urging such legislation.

#### REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS

The lack of proper registration of births and consequent inability to ascertain positively the ages of children is a constant hindrance to those who are conscientiously trying to adhere rigidly to the requirements of the recently enacted law governing the employment of children of tender years—commonly known as the "Child Labor Law." In fact this absence of age record is in many instances a shield to grasping and unscrupulous parents against whose greed the law is intended to operate. It is true it will take time for such a record to be of value, but this merely emphasizes the importance of delaying no longer in commencing the accumulation of data, the need for which is already at hand.

## MARRIAGE LICENSE

Our State's position as to divorce is well known. Is it not by reason thereof specially incumbent upon us to throw greater safeguards around the entering into the marriage relation? The early age at which matrimonial alliances are formed is in itself startling. The frequency with which the relation is severed—merely by mutual consent, or by desertion—is a deplorable menace to morals. We voice the sentiments, not only of the mill managers, but, we believe, of the more thoughtful and discerning mill operatives, when we urge the requiring of marriage licenses and greater watchfulness as to violations of existing laws.

## COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Irrevocably opposed, as we are, to "class legislation"—to the passage of any law designed either to exercise restraint over, or to accord special privileges to any one class of our citizens alone—we have been unable to give our support to any measures heretofore introduced intended to require school attendance on the part of the children of the cotton mill operatives only.

We admit that the facilities now provided by many of the mill corporations, the longer term of the mill school etc. would emphasize the necessity of compelling the youth of the cotton mill villages to accept the educational advantages thus afforded.

Still it must be remembered that it is from the farms that the bulk of our textile workers have come, and are still coming, and that the statistics as to lack of education—so easily obtained from the compact mill village—still reflect to a greater extent the educational deficiencies of the remote rural districts.

There are already more negro children than whites enrolled in the public schools of our state—the percentage of attendance of the negro children is larger. How much longer will the senseless fear of forcing (?) the negroes into school deter us from requiring an acceptance by the children of illiterate whites of the opportunities of learning which our public school system offers? Through what other method can a more intelligent citizenship be obtained?

We earnestly urge, hence, the passage of a law compelling school attendance by all children between the ages of eight and twelve, regardless of residence or avocation of parents,

Signed Jno. A. Law, Chairman,  
R. E. Ligon,  
J. Adger Smyth, Jr.,  
E. F. Verdery,  
Geo. W. Summer,  
J. M. Geer.

In this same year, 1906, a lively interest in the 10-hour day for all cotton-mill employees originated, but the bill for it was defeated.

In 1907 the Manufacturers' Association went before the legislature stating that in 1906 they had reduced hours to 64 per week, and offering a voluntary plan to reduce the number of legal working hours per week to 62 in 1908, and 60 in 1910. In opposition to the manufacturers' proposal, the Toole Bill was passed, reducing hours to 62 in 1907, and to 60 in 1908. 14 years of age was established as the minimum where the employed had to work in proximity to gears and pulleys, but the bill to raise the general standard was defeated. The comment of the "Charleston News and Courier," the leading paper of the state, and always known for its progressive public policies is significant:

The passage of the Toole 10 hour labor day law, which applies to the cotton mills exclusively, was not necessary and will probably do more harm than good, inasmuch as the cotton mill owners had voluntarily agreed upon a scheme of gradual reduction in the hours of labor which would have brought about the same result with less danger to the mills. Legislation which interferes with private contractual rights ought not to be the resort except when the circumstances of the case make the demand for it extreme. The cotton mills have been put on notice that the legislature will not trust them to manage their own affairs, even when they show a marked and plain disposition

to introduce methods for the improvement of labor conditions. The Toole Bill is calculated to discourage those cotton mill presidents who have been most active for the betterment of labor conditions.

On the other hand the defect of the marriage-license bill, which would have been a real and positive reform, was killed for no sound reason, whatever, and seems to have been a direct slap in the face of those who would correct evils that are known to be peculiarly incident to life in cotton mill settlements.

Undoubtedly the disposition of the legislature was not generally friendly to the textile industry.<sup>1</sup>

Those who understand the psychology of politics recognize in this action the strategy of the politicians who knew that group conflict is a better appeal from which to deliver political promises and denunciations than is a program of co-operation with the enlightened minority, particularly if the minority can be attacked on the grounds of class and capital.

In 1909 the factory-inspection provisions of the Commissioner of Labor bill reached fulfillment after hanging fire for two years. The opposition was based on the expense of the system, but this was not sustained. In the first annual report of the Commissioner in 1909 we find him pleading for the very reforms that the manufacturers had urged in their appearances before the legislature.<sup>2</sup>

In 1911 the act to require marriage license, and to regulate the official issue of the same was at last passed, before which time common-law marriages, without license, formal ceremony or registration were frequently contracted.

The same legislature raised the standard of the prohibition of the employment of children to 12 years of age, and prohibited all night work to those under 16. Parents' affidavits were required as to the ages of the children, and permits

<sup>1</sup> *Charleston News and Courier*, Feb. 1907, p. 4, c 3.

<sup>2</sup> *U. S. Senate Document*, No. 645, vol. vi, 61st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1910.



were to be issued by the Commissioner of Industries. Poverty cases were exempt. The enforcement of this legislation was inadequate and unsatisfactory, however earnest the efforts of the staff of the Commissioner.

In 1914 the state-wide registration of births was made a legal provision in place of the former optional municipal act. Lax compliance with this law has caused the present movement for more rigid adherence. Many physicians are indifferent to the importance of registration and many parents are still entirely willing to depend on the family Bible, or on the remembered happening of a simultaneous event, to establish the date of the birth of a child.

In his address to the General Assembly in 1919 Governor Richard I. Manning said, "In 1915 the age limit for child labor in South Carolina was raised to 14 years, and again in 1916 the legislature, acting upon my recommendation, very wisely raised the limit to 16 years. This is of the greatest importance since it affects the whole fabric of our social and economic life."<sup>1</sup>

The legislation of 1916 prohibited the employment of children under the age of 14 in factory, mine or textile establishment after January 1, 1917, and required working permits for those between the ages of 14 and 16.

This is a detail of significance to those who recall that by social tradition, economic interest and family proclivities, Ex-Governor Manning is of the same group as the cotton manufacturers. Through him, as through them, we see the functioning of the Old South's "noblesse oblige." Moreover, his was the heritage of carrying on those ideals of public service to the higher needs of mankind written into the policy of the state by his grandfather, Governor John Lawrence Manning.

<sup>1</sup> Address by Gov. R. I. Manning to the General Assembly of South Carolina, Jan. 15, 1919.

Also in 1915, eleven years after the manufacturers' first request for it, was passed the first compulsory school attendance act.

In 1916 the first Federal Child Labor Law went into effect, prohibiting the employment of children under 14 and setting 8 hours a day, between 7 A. M. and 6 P. M., 6 days in the week for children 14 to 16 years of age.

The actual disparity between the principles and the application of the State and Federal Labor Law is too slight to seem to justify the long and bitter arguments over the enactment of the Federal legislation. Of one thing we may be sure; the leaders and many others in South Carolina did not wish to perpetuate child labor. Since 1884 persistent, constructive effort to mitigate and to correct child labor, and insofar as possible to abolish it, stands as testimony to their intention, but when the question of States' Rights, a lion that never slumbers too soundly to awake at the slightest provocation, yawned and stretched, the advocates of this principle, motivated by a variety of incentives, sprang to its defense in an impassioned manner that flared up beyond the control of the reasonable element which has never wavered from its determination to make child labor unnecessary and illegal.

Even those who condemn the manufacturers as "plutocrats of greed" should see that men who have had the sagacity to build the industry from the ground up might very likely also have the common sense to recognize child labor as a proposition, commercially and socially too expensive to continue with the refining of the industry and the tightening up of occupational demands.<sup>1</sup>

If one is philistine enough now and then to bank the fires of reformatory zeal it is rather amusing to listen to a first-hand

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written comes this statement from the annual report of the Chief Factory Inspector in S. C., "The mills as a whole are trying to get away from child labor as they have found it to be very expensive," p. 14, 1925 report.

narrative of just what went on in the spinning room in those days when reformers referred to child doffers and spinners as "cheap and docile labor." Very much as men recall the pranks, rather than the sums of school days, the operatives in the mill now tell of the enviable and robust fun of having been doffers in those days "when kids learnt something useful."

Superintendents confirm the tales of these misdemeanors, or get apoplectic at the mention of them. It seems that the ambition of every boy employed was to be "the meanest kid in the county," and many reached the goal. As their chief indoor sport they claimed the privilege of hanging onto the shafting belts as the machinery slowly started and riding towards the twenty-foot ceiling. To them what was a good calling down, or more severe discipline in comparison with the dare-devil thrill of the journey up or the admiration gained from an acrobatic drop. Picker sticks offered possibilities for pleasure along unlimited lines, while spool boxes going up and down long alleys provided further suggestions for a little secret entertainment. A game of catch, with a ball improvised from yarn was a very natural way in which to wish to spend one's time while waiting for machines to fill, not to mention the American boy's love of just plain "scuffling," or making life miserable for the girls and women. There were the pleasures of psychological adventures too, getting the section man "upon his ear," hearing "old man so and so pitch and rar" (rear), keeping someone's work from running smoothly, experimenting insofar as one dared with the machinery, the joy of esprit de corps, "us boys," they call it. The choicest sport, because it was most taboo and the risks involved were greater, was to develop such precision of aim that any user of plug tobacco could hit his target from the fourth-story window. The more evident the autocracy of the target the greater the glory

of spotting his hat. Visiting superintendents were choice victims of this diablerie, but to none of them was it an innovation. All parties to the experience say that hunting out the offender was much more difficult than finding the proverbial needle in the haystack. What else went on in the spinning room I do not know, for these are some of the things they tell a lady.

Of course they got a disciplinary reaction from those in authority. In some cases this was cruelty. In most cases discipline was complicated with parental approval or disapproval, and the conception of the entire family as the unit of employment.

But all in all who would have had the doffers and the spinners different?—Real American kids, they were. If they bore too heavy a share of the cost of progress in the new Industrial South they themselves do not see it except as a move toward something better from something worse. Economic prosperity has wrought a great social change in the amelioration of poverty in the Piedmont. Together with legislation, prosperity has mitigated child labor, fortunately before long years of it had impaired the vitality of the racial stock.

In 1918 the Federal Child Labor Law of 1916 was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States upholding the decision of the North Carolina district court in the case of *Hammer vs. Dagenhart et al.* (Supreme Court of the United States, June 3, 1918, 38 Supreme Court Reporter, page 539.)

In 1919 the Supreme Court of the United States declared unconstitutional the second Federal Child Labor Law, approved Feb. 24, 1919, which placed a ten per cent tax on the net profit of goods produced in any mill or manufacturing establishment employing children under 14, or employing between the hours of 7 P. M. to 6 A. M. children

between the ages of 14 and 16. (*Johnston vs. The Atherton Mills*, Order in equity No. 222.) Interestingly this case, like that of *Hammer vs. Dagenhart*, originated in the Western District of North Carolina.

In 1925 the proposed twentieth amendment to the constitution of the United States giving Congress the power to "limit, regulate and prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age" went before the States for ratification, and as might be expected South Carolina cast an overwhelming vote against it in both houses of the General Assembly.

The legislation of 1918, together with a tightening up of the educational requirements in 1924, now defines the legal regulation of child labor in South Carolina.

As late as 1919 the Statutory Law of the State allowed the cotton mills to operate 60 hours a week, but not over 11 hours a day. In January of that year the South Carolina Cotton Manufacturers agreed to adopt the 55-hour week. Most of the mills made the change to a 10-hour day, with 5 hours on Saturday.

The Saturday half-holiday originated in Spartanburg, and probably in the State, at Saxon Mills in the earliest days of its operation, when the president gave instructions that repair work on the machinery was not to be done on Sunday. The superintendent demurred that there was no other opportunity. "Then close down Saturday afternoons." This practise attracted wide-spread comment and attention. Some operatives say that it was their reason for moving to Saxon, other operatives in other mills asked for the same arrangement. It was granted and the custom was established. In March, 1922, the legislature amended the 60-hour law in favor of the 55-hour week already in effect.

Aside from the legislation thus far outlined, there is not a great deal more that especially affects the textile industry and its operatives as such. There are Sanitation and Segre-

gation laws, the latter applying to races. The Employers' Liability Act is a permissive one only, and the first bill for workmen's compensation was discarded by the legislature in 1925 without any public discussion of it either before its introduction or in the house.

In 1916 the State Board of Conciliation was created by Governor Richard I. Manning. In the first year of its history it was called into action in a textile strike in Anderson, since which time its services have not been needed.

Another bit of legislation should have mention. In 1904 South Carolina got enthusiastic over immigration and set up a commission to attract foreign laborers. In 1906 importation was tried without much success. In 1909 the commission was transformed by replacing its duties—"Immigration—" with those of "Industries," the reason given for the change being the menace to the wage scale of the native laborers and to the earnings of the farmers. How much these elements themselves realized this is doubtful. There was, however, a widespread and active racial prejudice against the plan.

In the creation of the laws the mill people have taken a rather passive interest, except in the case of child labor, when, as they saw it, the rights of parents were being transgressed. With an ever-growing intelligence about matters of public welfare a more active influence may be expected. Already the mill people are sending representatives from their own ranks to the General Assembly, although this is very evidently motivated by group pride and loyalty more than by any desire for class legislation.

It may be that in the awakening and the self-determination of these Americans of pure Anglo-Saxon heritage and tradition lies the chance for unprecedented industrial peace and order. The situation is unique. We can know it only as it unfolds.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OCCUPATIONAL CONDITIONS

FIRST impressions gained in a trip through a Southern cotton mill are: the number of automatic devices on the machines, the consequent few employees, the amount of their idle time and the homogeneity of the nationality of the operatives.

The law of South Carolina permits a 55-hour week, which is applied by all the mills on a ten-hour basis for five days, with five hours on Saturday. The time actually spent in physical effort is estimated by the National Industrial Conference Board to be sixty to seventy per cent of the working day.<sup>1</sup>

The operatives are white Americans, and the presence of a foreigner among them is rare, as may be expected in a state where the percent of foreign born as shown by the United States Census of 1920 is but .4 against 99.6 native born.

A special report of the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor gives this report for occupational conditions at Saxon in a letter addressed to the President of the mill under date of December 12th, 1921.

"I find the mill conditions are safe and healthful. We do not expect to find them ideal in a building twenty years old.

"Floors in good repair, and clean; aisles good width, no obstructions; walls and ceiling white, clean, in repair; natural light, adequate in all rooms, windows large, clean and curtained. Ventilation, good; sanitation, drinking

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin No. 4*, National Industrial Conference Board, 1918: "Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of the Workers."

fountains, convenient on every floor; no common cups. Washing facilities, sinks, old but clean and in repair, no hot water; toilets separate for sexes, convenient on each floor, clean; fire escapes, central stairway, heavy fireproof doors, and firewalls between this and each room not narrow, natural and artificial light adequate, two freight elevators possible means of escape; no lunch room, as all employees go home to lunch in the one full dinner hour; rest room, none. Occupational problems—lint not excessive, humidity not excessive, excellent system; reaching by speeders and spoolers throughout ten-hour day; adequate seats and plenty of light; no hazards from machinery observed; pickers and opener machines exceptionally well guarded; individual motors eliminate many belts and pulleys; there is opportunity for continuation classes under the Smith-Hughes Act; all the supervisory positions are held by men, *Why Not Some Women?*"<sup>1</sup>

Absenteeism and labor turnover have not been given very serious consideration in the South and are only now catching the attention of the most progressive managements. A little study has been made here and there without much practical application of results.

Absenteeism is easy to understand and hard to combat among employees who have been accustomed in the country only to seasonal occupation, which, within itself, is marked with long periods of idleness "while the cotton is making." This, coupled with the pleasure-loving, leisure-enjoying psychological set of the entire section of the country actuates the mill operatives to take a day or so of leisure every now and then on general principles, and whenever an event of unusual interest occurs nearby.

A petition signed by the operatives for a holiday when the

<sup>1</sup> Lane, Mary, Special Agent, Women's Bureau, United States Department of Labor, December, 1921.



circus comes to town enables the mill to shut down with a certain dignity on an occasion when hands would have been too scarce to operate successfully. The truth of the whole matter is that the Industrial South is only beginning to go to work at regular steady employment.

Labor is still plentiful enough to offset this tendency toward idleness and the common knowledge of cotton-mill work is so prevalent that filling a vacancy is easy in normal times. Thus absenteeism is not realized in its full economic significance.

During the high peak of recent war-time wages, idleness was the greatest premium obtainable by the operatives from the situation. Here and there were a few who grasped the patriotic urge for bandage cloth, but the great majority adjusted their standards of living so that the high wages earned in part time would cover them, and leisure would be gained in which to watch the military activities at Camp Wadsworth. Overseers of the mill had daily to round up their help in person. Yet in the general scarcity of labor discipline was out of the question.

This was an acute localization of the normal and prevalent attitude toward work and leisure. There is not much common sense in putting a short-time work week on the Statute Books when the people claim it by divine right anyway. Those who try to explain absenteeism only as a consequence of fatigue and a long working day miss the real point in the case. By every right of his inheritance and custom the worker, only now in the transition state from an agricultural to an industrial society, believes that he has the right to work just when and only when and for how long as he pleases. He does not take easily to regulation.

Employment of the family unit undoubtedly increases absenteeism, for the management wishes to keep peace with a family furnishing three or four good workers, even though

each one of them may take a few days off every once in a while. To dismiss the absentee would be to sever connection with the other two or three employees without guarantee of an improved situation and as the employees well know, this works to their advantage.

In the early days of the mill, each Spring there used to be an epidemic of homesickness for the mountains so that often the labor force was seriously crippled by the exodus. In the Fall the people returned, often bringing new employees with them.

Employment of the help—the term “Labor,” like “Factory,” is taboo—is done by the superintendent in some instances, but more commonly by the overseers of the departments.

Labor management is thus on a man-to-man basis. The operatives do not think of their employer in corporate terms, but as working on such and such a job for Mr. So-and-so. Private and occupational life are inseparable, for a man may be one's boss, fraternal brother, back-door neighbor, Sunday School pupil, fellow musician, brother-in-law, all in one. Neighborhood contacts carry across, and relations in the mill are intensely human. The morale is fine. Discipline is, of course, expected and maintained; but all along the line the personal equation is established by natural bonds. There is genuine mutual respect between the management and the operatives. The right of direct appeal by anybody to anybody is taken for granted. Promotion is for individual merit, combined with length of service.

Frequently arises the question as to what extent the mills are recruiting labor from their own ranks. No scientific study has been made to determine this, although a journalistic article of some merit based on many observations by Richard W. Edmonds<sup>1</sup> draws the conclusion that for a long

<sup>1</sup>Edmonds, Richard W., “Why Cotton Mills Have Moved South,” *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 14, 1925.

time yet most of the mills will man themselves almost entirely from their own and neighboring villages. The birth rate among mill people is high (that no figures are available is regrettable,) the majority of children drop out of school in the intermediate grades, even when grammar and high schools are provided in the village, and with the tenant farms there is a constant exchange of personnel.

This observer recognizes the fact that there is at work a selective process by which some individuals adjust themselves to other manual occupations or clerical positions. Nothing is said, however, about the expansion and refining of the mills which are coming more and more to call in skilled chemists, designers, and clerical forces from outside the ranks. It seems to me that herein lies the opportunity for the industry to retain (if it cares to) those boys and girls endowed with superior ability; this, and the perpetuation of many small units instead of highly concentrated plants.

Having in mind several motives among which were the stabilization of employment, the introduction of a periodic physical examination, and a substantial expression of good will in time of misfortune for faithful service rendered, the Saxon Mills, in 1920, worked out with the Equitable Life Insurance Society a plan of group insurance for its employees. All that was hoped for in this plan has not yet been realized, and it is still regarded more or less as an experiment; but reviewed in the light of individual cases it sustains its merit.

The letter quoted is self-explanatory:

#### SAXON MILLS

Spartanburg, S. C.  
April 8, 1920.

To our People:

To guide and encourage you in doing for yourselves has been

the policy of the Saxon Mills. We believe this is better than our attempting to do for you, as the former increases both your self-reliance and your self-respect

Among other things, we have tried to encourage you in carry-life insurance, recognizing that all who have others dependent upon them should, as far as possible, make provision for their future.

Some, however, on account of advanced age or physical defects, are unable to obtain insurance. Yet these are perhaps the ones whose need of insurance is greatest. Through the group plan the Saxon Mills is able to obtain insurance on each and every one of its employees—thus doing for at least some of you what you cannot do for yourselves.

Hence, the Directors have authorized the taking out with the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States of a group policy covering the life of each employee who has served the Company for three months, or longer. They have also authorized the taking out for you of Health Insurance, providing, under certain restrictions, a weekly benefit in case of sickness. A schedule showing the benefits and conditions applying to the policy is given on the adjoining page.

The entire cost is to be borne by the Saxon Mills, the certificates of insurance being presented to our people as an evidence of interest in your welfare and of appreciation of your loyal services,

Yours truly,

Jno. A. Law,  
President.

The lives of all the operatives who had served the company three months or longer were insured in the sum of \$500.00, to increase \$100.00 for each additional year of service up to a maximum of \$1,000.00. Disability benefits were based on the flat rates of \$5.00 and \$10.00 a week, limited to a period of twenty-six weeks. At the close of five

years the insurance company was willing to include occupational accidents at a reasonable rate.

After five years' experience with the group insurance, it was found that the life-insurance benefits were too high in proportion to the average family financing, and the initial figure of \$500.00 was reduced to \$200.00. The readjustment is interesting sociologically as it illustrates a result of the family unit as the wage earner, rather than the individual. Twenty-six weeks was found to be a much longer period than that of the usual disability, and it was cut in half, still allowing a liberal margin of time for complete recovery in most cases.

The insurance experience has been recorded in this connection to show for a five-year period an average of three hundred policies held, with claims, as recorded in Table IV:

TABLE IV. GROUP INSURANCE EXPERIENCE SAXON MILLS, 1920-1925

A. CLAIMS SETTLED					
<i>Year</i>	<i>No. disability claims</i>		<i>No. death claims</i>		
1920-21 .....	42		4		
1921-22 ... ..	65		2		
1922-23 ..	44		0		
1923-24 .....	41		4		
1924-25 .....	44		1		
B. ANALYSIS OF DISABILITY CLAIMS					
<i>Year</i>	<i>Operations</i>	<i>Maternity</i>	<i>Influenza</i>	<i>Non-occupational accidents</i>	<i>Miscellaneous</i>
1920-21 ..... 5	5	17	2		13
1921-22 ..... 6	8	4	1		46
1922-23 ..... 3	4	15	2		20
1923-24 ..... 11	6	4	2		18
1924-25 ..... 8	8	15	0		13

In 1916 Saxon was one of the seven representative mill villages surveyed by the United States Public Health Commission over a period of fifteen days when pellagra was at

the height of its prevalence, being in that year 50.20% of all the sickness. Inasmuch as the figures are not recent, and the Commission asks for extreme caution in the use of its findings, the figures are not included here, and since in this connection the sociological importance lies in the control of the disease, and the knowledge gained about diet and sanitation.

We screened houses, and killed the Buffalo Gnat. The community bathed. It slept with windows open, ate proteins and vegetables and corn of tested high nutritious value. We withdrew some victims to the United States Pellagra hospital established at a neighboring mill, and sent others to its experiment station for their meals. The diligence got quick results, and two years before the hospital was discontinued in 1920 the local community had ceased to feel the need for it.

Before the installation of the sewerage system, and the centralized water supply, typhoid was a common disease, but no case has originated here for the past six years.

The accident hazard in the cotton industry is low. Absence of local figures necessitate use of those from Massachusetts, where in 1915 one of seven fatal accidents among 112,000 operatives could be ascribed to the industry itself. Of 7,214 non-fatal accidents, one-third resulted in disability of one day, and two-fifths in disability of more than one week.<sup>1</sup>

Redress for injury is through the courts of common justice, if the mill company or the casualty company fails to make satisfactory adjustment.

Saxon, like most of the mills, has had no experience with organized labor. Is this not partially explained by the fact that "labor unrest is not merely a desire for higher wages,

<sup>1</sup>"National Industrial Conference Board," *Report No. 4*, "Cotton Manufacturing," p. 56.

but the pain of instinctive relations unfulfilled . . . the revolt of men who see life passing without their ever having lived, who face the prospect of carrying their ideals and their aspirations unfulfilled and unspoken to the Grave.”<sup>1</sup>

If there is any one suffering very acutely “the pain of instinctive relations unfulfilled” at the cotton mills of the Piedmont he might soon find relief by making a contact with anyone of a dozen groupings that provide an outlet for social impulses and influences, opportunity for self-improvement and chances for individual development proportionate to capacity.

<sup>1</sup> Lee, Joseph, *The Philanthropist's Place in Democracy*, 1922, p. 140.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOCIOLOGICAL SUMMARY

THIS story has been told in an informal manner because its tenor is of common things and common ways. It is not enough, however, to dismiss the subject with the sole impression that the mill people of the Piedmont are an interesting group of very human human-beings undergoing a rapid transition from an agricultural scheme of things to a new industrial order. It is not amiss to linger thoughtfully for a moment over much of importance that is bound up in this great social change. To think of it in terms of sociological laws is to rightly gauge values within it and to foresee whither the movement may be leading.

Theoretical Sociology affords many hints and suggestions in this inquiry, while reciprocally many of these observations in the field of applied sociology substantiate the veracity and usefulness of generalized social laws.

While early beginnings of the textile industry in South Carolina indicate that the development of manufacturing was inevitable in the South, the acceleration which the movement gained after the Civil War illustrates that "under no other circumstance does the human mind go so swiftly and so surely to the significant fact in a bewildering maze of things as when it is under the compelling pressure of a great practical necessity."<sup>1</sup>

Around the industrial nuclei gathered a natural aggregation, in which a natural selection has asserted itself from the first drawing together of the operatives.

Thus far the mills have set a pace easily kept by nearly all,

<sup>1</sup> Giddings, Franklin H., *Democracy and Empire*, p. 49.



but with the tightening-up of occupational demands and the quickening of the advance a constantly increasing number of the inferior will fall by the wayside.

In the meantime, however, economic prosperity is creating a surplus of wealth and energy to be expended in erecting institutions and equipping organizations to care for those unequal to the demands of a busy and intelligent world. The cost of progress is severe but only through it are carried forward instruments of amelioration.

Especially applicable to the cotton-mill situation in the South are the laws of homogeneity and like-mindedness. Here are a people bound together by no fictitious resemblance; rather, in blood, in tradition, in beliefs, in interests, the mill people are one among themselves and practically so with the state at large. A mill population is indeed "a number of like-minded individuals who know and enjoy their like-mindedness, and are, therefore able to work together for common ends."<sup>1</sup>

In the State's conception of the practical resemblance within its people and in its feeling of like-mindedness among its members has sprung up an "extension of sympathy and the gentler virtues" that has, indeed, been the outstanding characteristic of the relationship between employer and employee. The degree of this is the scientific index of homogeneity.

Yet among these people so proudly aware of their bonds of blood and tradition is that mixture of conflict with tolerance, sufficient to "leaven but not explode" the lump. In the legislative conflicts of the South-Carolinians among themselves is shown heated group discussion and a wholesome diversity of opinion, but toward all federal legislation they present an unbroken front of opposition, or that resistance known as "extra-group struggle."

<sup>1</sup> Giddings, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

The people of South Carolina have been very frank in stating their desire to preserve their genuine homogeneity and like-mindedness. They did not say so in those words but they have gone on legislative record as opposed to immigration and in many subtle ways they infer that New England manufacturers locating within the state will do well to conform. If this is Anglo-Saxon bluntness it is, nevertheless, refreshing to find an ethnic group so proud of its heritage that it wishes to continue its own self-determination. Nor do they mince words about racial inter-mixture.

The cotton-mill movement has exhibited "both of the fundamental phenomena of evolution, namely, the integration of power and its differentiation." Under industrial integration the mill people have assimilated into a new order, and in the process has taken place the equilibrative struggle—the transformation of the weak by the strong.

When one reads that "the substitution of assistance for subjugation or for exploitation is a direct consequence of expanding consciousness of kind and a measure of it,"<sup>1</sup> one better understands the motive behind those generous expenditures which the manufacturers have made for all kinds of philanthropic, educational, and religious enterprises among their operatives.

As significant as this expenditure of social energy amassed by the corporations is the steady accumulation of social energy also being achieved by the rank and file of the mill people. Their constantly advancing standards of living mean that they have gone far beyond the limitations of that initial expenditure of social energy required for food-getting and reproduction. They are grasping the adaptive culture which follows on the heels of the material culture, and how much longer we shall read current statements that forty-five per cent of the children of the nation are in the South is

<sup>1</sup>Giddings, Franklin H., *Descriptive and Historical Society*, p. 324.

a problem in statistical projection; yet the late Francis A. Walker defended the hypothesis that without the foreign invasion of New England that section would have kept itself amply populated.

Important is the part which the physical factors and climate have played in the momentous change in the Piedmont. The waterpowers of the foothills were magnet to industry, but the equitable climate has continued to attract even since electric power has been shot across the State. The short, moderate winter and the long summer close to the altitude and breezes of the Blue Ridge mountains has ameliorated the struggle for existence and made life very comfortable and pleasant. Nor are there any subways in the Piedmont to irritate the nerves to frenzy, nor congested districts or slums to place an artificial premium on God's fresh air and sunshine. The situation makes its own argument for the decentralization of large cities.

The study of racial stocks denotes that we may expect to find certain traits and characteristics coloring the life of this community, and we do find them; Anglo-Saxons having acted, and acting, and intending to act according to their own notions of what conditions are ripe for legislative or other form of change. Liberty is exercised in degrees of varying commendability, but it carries with it a sense of equality, such as we have been wont to idolize in the concept of democracy. Some things which have—or have not—taken place rather well illustrate the truth of Plato's remark that "Democracy can do neither much good nor great harm."

What is the purpose of this movement in the New South which has brought riches for the few and great well-being for the many? What is the social function of this new order? How can we chart whither we are blowing on the waves of this industrial expansion?

The commercial terminus will set itself according to the

laws of economics, but those who are interested in the social values aboard can also choose a port. "*The development of the personality of the social man*"<sup>1</sup> seems to be what the New South has been groping for in a trial-and-error process. That has been the spirit of the opportunities afforded for self-development and social expression in the mill communities.

This, then, is the sum and substance of the matter, the gauge for our endeavors, the criterion for our progress or our failure:

If the man himself becomes less social, less rational, less manly; if he falls from the highest type, which seeks self-realization through a critical intelligence and emotional control, to one of those lower types that manifest only the primitive virtues of power; if he becomes unsocial, the social organization, whatever its apparent merits, is failing to achieve its supreme object. If, on the contrary, the man is becoming ever better as a human being, more rational, more sympathetic, with an ever broadening consciousness of kind, then, whatever its apparent defects, the social organization is sound and efficient.

The degree of social personality is measured by the increase of vitality, of sound and high mentality, of morality and of sociality; by a decrease in the population of the number of the defectives, the abnormal, the immoral, and of the desocialized, the deindividualized and the degraded.<sup>2</sup>

To further these things is to keep faith with the pioneers of the textile industry in the Piedmont. They were the product of a time of grave responsibility toward questions of public concern. They had to see things in terms of a new commonwealth. Their heritage was that "spiritual brotherhood . . . created by blood and iron not less than by thought and love."

<sup>1</sup> Giddings, Franklin H., *Descriptive and Historical Sociology*, p. 541.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 541.

<sup>3</sup> Giddings, Franklin H., *Democracy and Empire*, p. 357.

To accept their social policy is to accept heavy responsibilities of leadership; to carry on their torch is to truly create opportunities for developing the personality of the social man. Here, then, is challenge and privilege, and much to bear in mind lest we come to know that the New South is in many things richer and stronger and wiser but it is neither so happy nor so kindly as the Old.

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## VITA

Marjorie A. Potwin was born in East Windsor, Connecticut, in 1897. She was educated at the Enfield High School, Lake Erie College and Simmons College and graduated from Columbia University with the degree of B. S. in 1919. She received the degree of M. A. from the University of Chicago in 1923. While doing further graduate work at Columbia University she was in the seminars of Professors A. A. Tenney and Franklin H. Giddings.

Her applied sociology has been the social and educational organization and development of the Saxon and Chesnee Mills communities in Spartanburg, S. C. For two years she was a member of the faculties of the Summer schools of Converse College, and Winthrop, the State College for Women in South Carolina.

